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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Mighty Haag lithograph on our cov- Brackenridge, PA 15014 er is printed in memory of Thomas P. Parkinson, a past president of the Circus Historical Society. The Haag show was his favorite.

The Haag poster was printed by the Erie Lithographing Co. and was used around

The original is in the Albert Conover collection.

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CHS ELECTION

The election of officers and directors of the Circus Historical Society takes place at the end of odd-numbered years for two year terms. A ballot for the 1993 election is enclosed with this issue.

Only CHS members are entitled to vote. Your membership number must be shown on your ballot. Bandwagon subscribers are not entitled to vote.

Please mark your ballot and return it to election commissioner Stuart Thayer, whose address is on the back of the ballot. Results of the election will be published in the January-February issue.

SEASON'S REVIEW

There is still time for you to provide information for the review of the 1993 circus season that will appear in the January-February Bandwagon. We are in need of material on small and indoor shows.

Send information, photos and illustrations to: Fred D. Pfening III, 2240 Tewksbury Road, Columbus, Ohio 43221.

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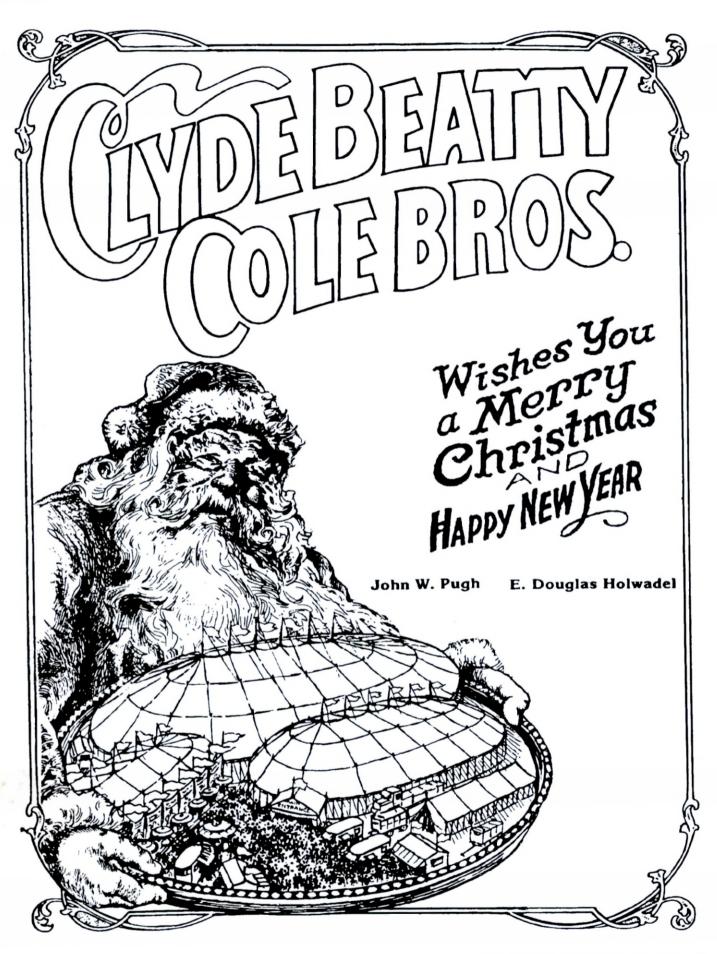
I certify the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Publisher. (9-24-93)

AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966-Jan.-Feb. 1967-July-Aug., Nov.-Dec. 1968-All but Jan.-Feb. 1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct. 1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct. 1971-All but May-June. 1972-All available. 1973-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec. 1974-All but Mar.-Ap.; May-June. 1975-All available. 1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec. 1977-All but Mar.-Ap. 1978-All available. 1979-All but Jan.-Feb. 1980-1986-All available. 1987-All but Nov.-Dec. 1988-1993-All available.

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argely overlooked or simply ignored in the abundant writings about elephants in zoos and circuses are two births that occured at the Ringling Brothers winter quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin at the turn of the century. It seems incredible that these events, widely reported at the time and so obviously important to the history of elephant keeping, have heretofore managed to remain outside the accepted scholarship on the subject. We will discuss how that may have occured but first to the babies themselves.

There were two Asiatic calves born in Baraboo, the first in 1900 and the second in 1902. The mother of both was Alice. Sire of the first one was Baldy. Though the paternity of the second was not specified in the accounts so far discovered, it was most likely the same.

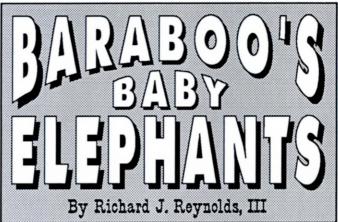
THE CALVES

NICK (later NED), a male, was the name of the first calf. He was born to Alice at or about 4:30 a.m. on Monday, November 19, 1900 in the elephant barn on Water Street in Baraboo.¹

The 1900 season had ended in Monticello, Arkansas on Wednesday, November 14th, and the circus had just returned and unloaded on Sunday, the day before the birth. The first section had arrived in Baraboo at 6:00 a.m. and the third at 1:00 p.m. Mother Alice, however, had remained in Baraboo throughout the year. Her parturition had been anticipated, and the proprietors obviously sought to avoid the added stress and complications of a birth on the road.

When the baby was born, Alice was apparently chained in the customary manner by her hind legs

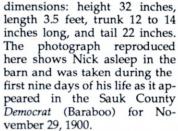
in line with all the other elephants around the outer walls inside the barn, all of them facing the training ring in its center. The accounts tell us there were twenty-four other elephants there at the time so that Alice and her baby would have made a total of twenty-six. They were under the direction of E. "Pearl" Souder who had been been in charge of the pachyderm department since joining the Ringling show for the 1894 season. He was a veteran animal man with experience dating back at least as far as Sells Bros. in 1881.2



The commotion among the elephants attendant upon the birth aroused the keepers sleeping in the building. At first they were puzzled as to the cause of the ruckus but soon discovered the baby. Mother Alice was attempting to trample it while others tethered close by tried to drag it around with their trunks. At obvious risk, the elephant men managed to get the newborn safely away and into the ring in the middle of the building where a nest of hay was arranged. Meanwhile, Dr. E. C. Foster, a Baraboo veterinarian, had been summoned. Upon arrival, he assisted the elephant men in wrapping the baby with blankets to keep it warm and in helping it struggle to its feet. By forenoon it was up and walking on its own.

Within five days the youngster had been given the name Nick.³ At birth he was said to weigh 200 pounds (two reports said 300) and to have the following

This photo of Nick asleep appeared in the November 29, 1900 Sauk County Democrat. Circus World Museum collection.



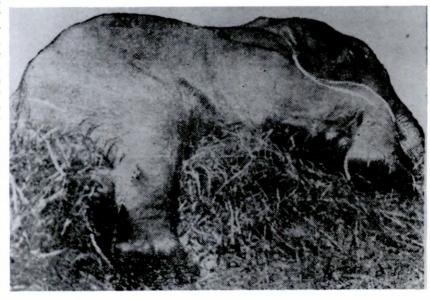
Despite all the excitement among the Ringling folks, the press, and townspeople, an ominous note was sounded right away as Alice would not nurse her calf. She reacted violently whenever keepers tried to nudge the youngster toward

her mammaries which were swollen with the essential lacteal fluid. So, a milch cow was obtained, and Nick was bottle fed with the substitute. Shortly after the birth, mother and baby were moved out of the elephant house and into the quieter atmosphere of the ring barn where equestrianism was ordinarily practiced. Alice was now becoming more tolerant of her offspring. Even though she continued to reject efforts to have her nurse him, she was very cognizant of his presence and became quite upset when he woke up with a cry or got out of her sight. All the while elephant men were milking her daily to keep her liquid from drying up in the hope she would soon allow the calf to feed naturally.4

The people of Baraboo were anxious to see the baby elephant, but it was late November and very cold in Baraboo. Circus officials were trying to keep Nick as warm as possible in the drafty barn and feared that repeatedly opening the doors to admit and excuse the general public would cause the youngster to take a chill.⁵ Naturally, exceptions were made

for members of the press and select others.

On November 28th, when Nick was nine days old, he received some distinguished visitors in Wisconsin Governor Edward Scofield, his wife, and the Governor's private sectary, Col. Starkey. They had made the 37 mile trip to Baraboo from the state capital at Madison for the express purpose of seeing the baby elephant. When all were assembled around the youngster, the Governor was asked to rename him. He deferred to his wife, and she selected Ned, a nickname she



had long used for her husband. A keeper then broke a bottle of milk over little Ned's head, an act which, if nothing else, would have demonstrated the cranial induration on an infant elephant. Thus it was that Nick became Ned for the rest of his days.⁶

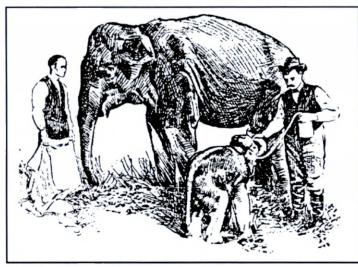
The brothers Ringling were naturally elated over Ned's birth and the prospect of hugely increased gate receipts which such an attraction could be expected to garner. To that end, on January 17 and 29, 1901, they ordered from the Courier Printing Company of Buffalo, New York thousands of forty-eight, sixteen, twelve, one, and half sheet lithographs

depicting a baby elephant. They were, of course, to be plastered all across the land heralding the coming of the 1901 edition of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Show and its wondrous baby elephant. Then, on February 18th, the circus abruptly cancelled the order. Ned was dead!

The little fellow passed away on Saturday evening February 16, 1901 when thirteen weeks old, failing by three days to make a full three months. He had been sick for several days. Veterinarians and a physician (perhaps Baraboo's Dr. Daniel M. Kelly) had tried their best to save him. Death was attributed to spasms caused by teething. Regardless of that post-mortem pronouncement, we must suspect that nutritional problems contributed to his demise.

Unlike Hebe and Queen who nursed their newborn calves Columbia and Bridgeport on, respectively, Cooper and Bailey (1880) and Barnum and London (1882), Ringling's Alice rejected Ned; and the experiment of hand raising him was tried. It did not work, nor would that method be successful later in the teens when the same thing was tried with the offspring of Sells Floto's Alice (a different animal). She also violently rejected each of her calves except for the last one which was born in the Salt Lake City, Utah zoo. 10

Milk from the mother elephant contains properties thought to be almost indispensable to the survival of the calf. As noted above, Ned was fed with cow's milk, and it is now known that its fat poses terrible digestive problems for infant elephants. That he lived as long as three months suggests that his Ringling caretakers tried various milk formulas. Additives of some sort must have been tried because *Billboard* (March 2, 1901, p. 5) reported that Ned was fed "malted milk" at \$10.00 per week, a considerable sum back



This drawing of Nick and Alice appeared in the November 29, 1900 Sauk County *Democrat*. Circus World Museum collection.

then. Perhaps they also got some natural fluid into the calf by milking the mother and feeding it via the bottle.

In terms of scientific advancement, light years would pass before bottle raising would work with elephants. Lee S. Crandall reported that Asiatic calves were successfully hand raised in the Rome, Italy zoo in 1948 and 1950 using several experimental formulas combining cow's milk, both whole and fat free, with ingredients scientifically selected to approach the organic composition of elmilk. Additional supplements were fed, and whenever evidence of indigestion appeared changes were immediately made. 11 Dorothy Sheldrick, who has raised orphaned African elephant calves in Kenya, has written that they are intolerant of the fat in milk from cattle and that only recently have for-mulas from Wyeth Laboratories been found which will work as a substitute.12 But, little, if any, of this was known to those struggling to keep Ned going in wintry, bucolic Baraboo back at the turn of the century.

Though disappointed by the loss of Ned, the Ringlings did not simply drop the idea of featuring a baby elephant on their 1901 tour. Within days after the calf's death they were asking animal dealers William Bartels in New York, W. Cross in Liverpool, England, and Carl Hagenbeck in Hamburg, Germany to locate for them a baby elephant. The cable message to Hagenbeck specified a calf of not more than forty inches in height. With all the notoriety their baby bull had gained in both local and national press, the urgent requests to the dealers are proof that the Ringlings fully intended to

try to pass off a substitute as Ned even though news of his death had been published in *Billboard*. ¹⁴ None of the dealers could deliver, however. Two years later Hagenbeck did have what the brothers wanted and a ruse was on--more about that in a moment.

Upon his demise, Ned's remains were turned over to Edward D. Ochsner a taxidermist from Prairie du Sac, a small community in southern Sauk County of which Baraboo is the seat.¹⁵ Edward was a member of one of the most prominent families in the county, and Baraboo's Ochsner Park takes its name from them. Though self taught in the art of taxidermy,

Ed Ochsner had a national reputation for quality work. He was a good friend of Al Ringling's and prepared a number of smaller animals that had died on the show. It once offered him the remains of an adult elephant, but he declined because he did not have the space for such an undertaking. However, when Ned expired, he accepted the task of mounting the little fellow's remains. 16

The circus apparently had the idea, initially, of exhibiting Ned's stuffed remains in its 1901 menagerie. 17 That does not appear to have happened. Writing in the Billboard (March 17, 1906. p. 22), in an article titled, "First Elephant Ever Born in America," Warren A. Patrick, a former Ringling press agent, stated that Ned's mounted remains, as well as those of the second calf born in Baraboo (see below), were kept by the circus in a locked and unfrequented room at its Baraboo winter quarters and were occasionally shown by the managers to close friends. Unfortunately, Patrick's choice of words made it sound like the baby elephants were a secret. In your writer's opinion, that tended to contribute to the notion that the accounts of the elephant births in Baraboo were fabrications instead of truth. There is no doubt, however, that the mounted body of baby elephant "Ned Scofield" was displayed for several days in the Ragatz Shoe Store in Prairie du Sac, taxidermist Ochsner's home town. 18

UNNAMED CALF, a female that weighed 250 pounds, was born to Alice around noon on Sunday, October 26, 1902 at Ringling winter quarters in Baraboo. At the time the circus was down in Texas nearing the end of its tour. This would indicate that Alice had been left behind when the show went out that year. Given that her gestation period could have been anywhere from 18 to 22 months, Alice must have been bred at Baraboo around

February or March, 1901, i. e., just about the time Ned died. The accounts did not state the name of the second calf's sire, but Baldy would be a good guess.

More elaborate preparations were made for this birth. As her time neared, Alice was taken to the ring barn where a large stake had been driven into the ground within the ring. The elephant men, at the direction of Charles Ringling and the veterinarian, then attached chains linking all four of Alice's legs to the post. This, incidentally, was the same procedure followed by Barnum and London in 1882 when Queen successfully gave birth to her calf at that show's Bridgeport, Connecticut winter quarters. 19 But the Baraboo effort failed.

The moment her female calf was born, Alice tried to crush it. Keepers rushed in, drove her off the helpless little creature, picked it up, and rushed with it into an adjoining room, closing behind them a heavy oaken door and slamming bars across it. Alice got loose and came after them. She smashed through the door, and attacked her newborn. The men jabbed at her with pitchforks and elephant hooks but to no avail. The infant was crushed and killed. Thus ended the brief life of the second and last elephant born in Baraboo.²⁰

DAM AND SIRE

On those rare occasions when an elephant was actually born on a circus in the old days, it was a given that the owners would claim a "first" of some sort. The Ringlings were no exception. They initially asserted that Ned was the first elephant ever born in America. When the press called attention to the earlier births, the Ringlings countered with the claim that Ned was the first to have been both bred and born here. They suggested that previous calves were from females already pregnant when they were imported (also untrue!). To make their case for "bred and born," they pointed out that Alice and Baldy had been in America for many years longer than the necessary gestation period. In so doing, they provided key information about the parents. Baldy, they told the press, had been imported for the Burr Robbins circus while Alice had been in a Des Moines, Iowa zoo after which she was with the Albert Wetter circus from whence they acquired her in 1894.21 Based on this information and the leads it provided we are able to put together profiles of the dam and sire.

ALICE

Like many old time pachyderms, uncertainty surrounds her earliest years in America. An account in the *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines) for June 23, 1889 said she was then seven years old and been

imported by Barnum as a calf but did not say when. There was no Alice among the twenty-two members of the Barnum and London elephant herd identified by name in the New York *Times* for February 4, 1882 (p. 8). So, she must have arrived here later—had to if she were only seven in 1889

Henry E. Bowser, Barnum's long time secretary and accountant, dutifully kept extensive office diaries which are preserved in the Pfening Archives, Columbus, Ohio. As here pertinent, we found an entry on February 10, 1883 that three small elephants arrived from Hamburg making a total of twenty-eight in the Barnum herd.²² Eight months later, on October 31, 1883, Bowser recorded that six more elephants arrived making a

total of thirty-three in all. This latter group may have included the four which, per Bowser's entry for October 10, 1883 (based on a cable from Hagenbeck), were then en route aboard the ship Elbe. Perhaps Alice was one of these nine 1883 imports.

As is well known, the large female African elephant Alice, Jumbo's so-called

widow, was brought over from the London zoo for Barnum and London's 1886 season. As she was a celebrated animal and had first dibs on that name, our young female Asian may have been assigned a different moniker during her Barnum days.

Another account of Alice's background (without using that name) appeared in a May 8, 1894 newspaper clipping among the Chindahl papers. It said she was then (1894) about twenty five years old and had first been with Forepaugh and then with Barnum.²³ Because of their heated rivalry, it is difficult to imagine those two trading anything except verbal barbs. Yet, we must acknowledge that they did join forces to present a combination of their respective circuses at Madison Square Garden in March, 1887.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, numerous small privately owned zoos sprung up across America. Sometimes they operated in conjunction with or as part of a larger amusement park that offered boat rides, picnic grounds and the like. Some were come-ons for real estate development. Many were short lived and left no trace of their having existed except for such information as can be abstracted from old newspapers and local histories. From just such sources we learn that one of them was the Des Moines Zoological Garden which operated in the Iowa capital from

1889 to 1893. It seems to have been inaugurated by one L. M. Mann who bought and owned its first animals.²⁴ Within a year, however, it was being run by the Zoological Park Company whose president, W. W. Fink, was a prominent local businessman and real estate developer.²⁵ It was to this place of pleasure that Mr. Mann brought our subject pachyderm.

Alice arrived at the Des Moines zoo at the end of June, 1889 from World's Museum in Boston where she had been residing "of late" after having been with Barnum. 26 She was at the Des Moines Zoological Garden until shortly before it closed. Alice plus 2 lions, 3 lionesses, 1 black leopard, 1 baboon, 1 black

bear, and 16 monkeys were sold to Irwin Bros., a small railroad circus based in Buffalo, New York. Its general agent, one Harry W. Semon, purchased them on June 24, 1893 and shipped them via the Rock Island railroad to Benton Harbor, Michigan where, presumably, they were to meet the circus and travel with it for the remainder of its 1893 tour. 27

From Irwin Bros. in 1893, Alice somehow found her way to Chicago where, in early May, 1894, she was purchased by Albert M. Wetter to-

was purchased by Albert M. Wetter together with other animals of possible Irwin tenure. The previous year (1893) Wetter, a wealthy young dilettante of Massillon, Ohio, had organized and sent out from his hometown a small but attractive mud show named Albert M. Wetter's New Model Moral Show. But, it had no elephant, a shortcoming which the proprietor solved with Alice for 1894. 29

Mark Monroe, Wetter's menagerie superintendent who had been elephant boss on Ringling the year before (1893), went to Chicago from Massillon to fetch the elephant and other animals, returning to winter quarters on or about May 14th.³⁰ The 1894 season began at Massillon on May 15th with Monroe presenting Alice in the ring. Alas, a combination of factors doomed the show, not the least of which was the illness of its enthusiastic but frail owner. His circus closed after only two weeks and marched back to Massillon.³¹

The Ringlings would become Alice's new owners. In their 1894 route book (p. 149), under date of July 23rd at Meadville, Pennsylvania, they stated: "A new elephant joins the show, having been purchased by the Ringling Bros. from the defunct Wetter Show." When next we hear of her she had given birth to Ned in 1900 followed by the second calf in 1902.

We do not know how much longer Alice remained in the Ringling herd. However, it is this writer's guess that, because of her destructive behavior toward her two calves, the show was fed up and soon got rid of her. The Ringlings certainly did not need her because they had acquired fourteen new Asiatic elephants from Hagenbeck during 1901 and 1902. The first three arrived in April, 1901. For \$4500 they got the next three (females) in April, 1902, and, for another \$13,800, eight more later that year in December.³² These acquisitions suggest a partial replacement of the herd, i.e., new and younger elephants for older ones.

Our subject mother elephant would appear to be a new animal for the record books, at least as Alice. That name does not appear in any of the lists and biographies

of turn of the century Ringling elephants researched and maintained by such notable devotees of the subject as Don Marcks, Raymond "Sabu" Moreau, the late Charles W. "Chang" Reynolds, and William Woodcock. Accordingly, she is not mentioned by Chang Reynolds in either his "The Ringling Elephants, 1888-1967," Bandwagon, September-October, 1968 or his "The Bulls Named Alice," Bandwagon, May-June, 1976.

Reynolds' 1968 paper acknowledged uncertainty over the identity of the circa 1900 Ringling elephants. He pointed out that the list of fifteen in Ringling's 1895 route book included names which are so exotic sounding that they must have been invented by the press department solely for the book because he had not found them elsewhere. Though Alice was certainly with the show in 1895, that name is not among those listed in the route book. It must have been considered too pedestrian by the writers. At least that is the only rationalization that comes to mind.

Reynolds' 1976 paper about elephants named Alice does not purport to be allinclusive of those which have had that name. And, none of those he described sounds like our subject, unless it might have been "Barnum Show Alice" or, as Woodcock called her, "Bughouse Barnum Alice." As Reynolds pointed out, her career from 1914 until she died in early 1933 is well known but not her earlier years. There is uncertainty about when she was supposed to have been with Barnum. Of course, if she were our subject elephant, something as significant and relatively recent as her motherhood on Ringling should have been an indispensable part of her reputation among the old elephant hands. That it was not argues against her being the same as the mother of the Baraboo babies.

Summarizing the facts as known,



Baldy at the W. B. Reynolds Circus winter quarters in Rockford, Illinois around 1893. Pfening Archives.

Alice's career went thusly: Forepaugh (?); Barnum (ca. 1888); World's Museum, Boston (1889); Des Moines Zoological Garden (June, 1889-June, 1893); Irwin Bros. (1893); Albert Wetter (May, 1894); Ringling Bros. (June, 1894-October, 1902; beyond that unknown).

BALDY

Unlike Alice, the sire is well known to the elephantologists. As noted earlier, the Ringlings averred that Baldy was imported by the showman Burr Robbins. He owned and operated a circus each year from 1871 through 1887 except for 1882. That year he sold it to Myers and Shorb who called it the Big United States and New Great Eastern Circus. However, they failed before the season was over, and Robbins bought most of it back at auction in Louisville, Kentucky on September 5, 1882. The Burr Robbins show was one of the most successfull circuses ever. At the end of its third season (1873), it moved its base of operations to Janesville, Wisconsin, some forty miles southeast of Madison, from whence it would operate for the remainder of its days. By 1875 Robbins had acquired a large tract of Janesville land upon which he built nice winter quarters facilities for his circus, the site being named Spring Brook Farm.³³

Unlike his larger competitors in the East, Barnum and Forepaugh, Robbins did not make the number of elephants exhibited a focal point of his show, for he does not seem to have acquired but four and never carried more three at one time. He purchased individual elephants in 1873, 1876, 1881, and 1884.³⁴

Baldy was obtained by Burr Robbins from Carl Hagenbeck, Hamburg, Germany. Described as a young elephant, he arrived at Janesville on April 20, 1881. While being walked from the railroad depot to winter quarters, he broke away from his keepers and created quite a ruckus. He could not be recaptured until the "big elephant" was brought out from quarters and calmed him down. He was finally chained to the big one, and together they marched to the Robbins farm.³⁵

Our subject male was originally called Duke. However, by September, 1882, shortly after Robbins had repurchased him at the Myers and Shorb auction, he had gotten the name Baldy.³⁶ It must have come from W. M. "Baldy" Thompson, Robbins' menagerie superintendent.³⁷ In later years we find press agents occasionally referring to him by other

names, but to the insiders he was always Baldy.

The big elephant whose becalming influence initiated Baldy to his circus career was probably big Jennie, also sometimes called Queen or Queen Jumbo, an unusually tall female Asiatic. She would have been one or the other of those acquired by Robbins in either 1873 or 1876. Baldy and Jennie would troupe together for many years, often as the featured animals on the succession of smaller shows with which they appeared until they were purchased by the Ringlings.

The pair was with Myers and Shorb's ill-fated outfit of 1882, and then they were back with the Burr Robbins circus through 1887.38 In December of that year the Janesville showman retired from the active circus business and traded the two big elephants and other circus properties to Thomas L. Grenier of Chicago in return for a large theater and/or entertainment complex owned by the latter, known as Grenier's Garden, and located on Chicago's West Madison Street.39 Baldy and Jennie were no strangers to Grenier as they and other animals had been leased by him from Robbins during the winter of 1883-84 for exhibition at the said Garden.40

It would appear that Grenier had the two elephants on his Grenier Bros. circus of 1888.⁴¹ Early the next year he offered them and other circus properties for sale.⁴² There were no takers for Baldy and Jennie, at least not right away, because they were with Grenier's Circus and Menagerie when it played under canvas dates in May and June, 1889. Their presence is confirmed by accounts of the damage and hullabaloo caused when they ran away in Chicago--not once but twice.

On May 8, 1889, while chained together, the two elephants took off from Grenier's Chicago winter quarters at Randolph

and Ann Streets as they were being walked to the Chicago & North Western depot for shipment to nearby Evanston, presumably for a tented engagement there by the Grenier show. They did it again a month later, on June 6th, also while chained together. This time their escapade took place when the Grenier circus was being moved from one lot to another on Chicago's west side.⁴³

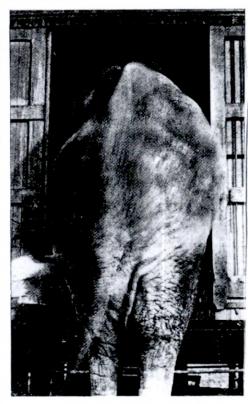
The story of Baldy and Jennie now switches to the west coast where, beginning in 1888, John S. McMahon had based his small circus.44 There were three McMahon brothers, John, Joseph, and Charles, who were, variously, circus owners, managers, and performers, sometimes together, at other times not.45 We are here interested in John as it was to his show that the two big pachyderms migrated in 1890, presumably via purchase from Grenier. As was common in the trade, particularly for small shows, John McMahon's circus was billed under a variety of ever changing, high sounding names such as that for his 1890 trek through California, to wit: United All Feature Shows, Hippodrome, Museum, and Wild Animal Exhibition.⁴⁶ Within the circus fraternity it was simply John S. McMahon's circus.

A June, 1890 account from the Pacific Northwest described how McMahon's two elephants ran away in Seattle while his circus was on the wharf preparing to embark,⁴⁷ no doubt because the next date was more easily reached by a water route than by land. The two big pachyderms were featured again by McMahon in 1891, a 55 foot elephant car having been added to transport them.⁴⁸ Earl Chapin May, who was around at the time, observed that John McMahon's show was a two car "non Sunday school outfit," i.e., a grift show, and that it offered little more than Baldy and Queen Jumbo (Jennie).⁴⁹

By 1892 John McMahon was in poor health. Toward the end of that season a decision must have been made to abandon the West Coast and head East. McMahon would not make it. He died on November 17, 1892 in his private car on the circus train as it was passing through Missoula, Montana en route to new quarters in Chicago. His entire five car show, including the two big elephants, was immediately offered for sale.⁵⁰

Baldy and Jennie next went to W. B. (William Burton) Reynolds. His family (no relationship to this writer) was located in Rockford, Illinois where they were prominent in business and civic affairs. W. B., son of George Washington (Wash) Reynolds, was another of those without circus experience but who, with family and hometown financial support, had a brief go at the traveling show business. The W. B. Reynolds Circus, head-

quartered in its owner's home town, tramped through its initial season (1892) as a mud show using a single elephant leased from Ben Wallace of Peru, Indiana. Reynolds was ambitious. He quit the muddy roads of '92, returned the leased elephant to Wallace, acquired Baldy and Jennie from the defunct McMahon show, and went out in 1893 as a twelve car railroad circus.⁵¹



Baldy being loaded. The caption of this photo in the 1895-96 Ringling route book reads: "Baldy getting into car. So large he cannot be loaded in the ordinary way with the runs." Pfening Archives.

Baldy was now a really impressive male, and he continued to grow, addingan inch and a half to his height during the 1894 season, so much in fact that the roof of his rail car would have to be raised for the '95 tour. Harry Petts had charge of Baldy and Jennie on the Reynolds show where they were not known to have caused any trouble.⁵² That was certainly an improvement (probably in care and training) over what had happened with Grenier and McMahon.

Baldy and Jennie went from Reynolds to Ringling. Beset with financial woes, some of them no doubt due to the financial panic and depression of the mid-1890s, the W. B. Reynolds Circus ground to a halt during its 1896 tour. It was purchased by the World's Greatest on August 12th of that year, 53 and both Chang Reynolds and William Woodcock give that

as the date when the two big elephants joined the Ringlings. However, the show's 1896 route book said nothing about it under the entry for August 12th. Instead, at Galesburg, Illinois five days later (August 17th), the following was written, to wit: "Show increased here by the addition of six cages of animals, three camels, twenty-nine head of horses and ponies, one flat, and one stock car." This was obviously former Reynolds property. But, there was no mention of the two huge elephants. Given their celebrity status, they should have been prominently described. This leads one to wonder if the Ringlings had not already acquired them, perhaps over the winter of 1895-96 when Reynolds was under financial pressure. Support for that view is found on page 43 of the 1896 Ringling route book where we read, "On April 17th . . . [at Chicago] . . . Baldy, the largest of the elephantine herd, knocked the big brute down [a bear chained near the elephants] and saved the child's life." That event was four months before they got the other Keynolds property! Regardless of just when he arrived, the big male was definitely a Ringling animal for all or part of the 1896 season.⁵⁴

The Ringling show found that Baldy would not enter or leave his railroad car by using the customary inclined ramp. Instead, he climbed in as shown by the accompanying photograph which is from the 1896 Ringling route book. We assume he stood up once inside. He followed a similar procedure to get out, albeit head first. His method of entering and leaving his car was widely publicized. It was said to have arisen from the fact that he was so tall he would bump his head on the door top if he used the ramp.55 The big male became a fixture in the Ringling herd and was always described as the largest of their pachyderms. As noted earlier, show management said that he was Ned's sire.

According to the Woodcock records, Baldy died at Ringling's Baraboo quarters over the winter of 1915-16. The next season (1916) his long time companion, Jennie, was featured on the Ringling circus as Big Bingo.⁵⁶ She too was nearing the end of her days and died while that show was at Columbus, Ohio on May 17,1918.⁵⁷

Summarizing, Baldy's circus days went as follows: Burr Robbins (1881); Myers and Shorb (1882); Burr Robbins (1883); Grenier's Garden (winter 1883-84); Burr Robbins (1884-87); Grenier's circus (1888-89); John McMahon (1890-92); W. B. Reynolds (1893-95); and Ringling Bros. (1896-1915).

BABY BOO

In preparing to launch their 1903 tour, the Ringlings sent a baby elephant announcement to *Billboard* which its editors published in the April 4, 1903 issue, as



"Mother" Veneta and Baby Boo in-1903. Pfening Archives.

follows: "Ringling Bros. possess quite an at-traction this year in the shape of a baby elephant which is about seven weeks old. It is named Baby Boo, and she is about 30" high. She is the daughter of Baldy and Alice, two of Ringling Bros.' largest elephants." When the brothers began their tour that spring, they plastered the countryside in advance of their coming with a charming poster depicting a mother and baby elephant. It proclaimed, "Little Baby Boo, Only American Born Baby Elephant And His Mother--[the baby is]--No Larger Than a Newfoundland Dog." Their newspaper ads said much the same, going so far as to state that the baby was born on January 8, 1903. It was a hoax.

There is no doubting that in 1903 the Ringlings featured a mother Asiatic elephant and her nursing calf which they named Baby Boo. However, neither breeding nor birth took place in America. Both occured in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) with parturition in March or April, 1902. From that island, mother and calf, accompanied by their native handler, were sent to Carl Hagenbeck in Hamburg, arriving there about the end of October, 1902.

On November 14, 1902, the German animal dealer wrote the Ringlings that the calf stood only thirty-eight inches tall, was but seven or eight months old, and had been a big hit with the children of Hamburg. Coincidentally, at that very moment, the Ringlings were wanting more elephants and for several months had been negotiating with Hagenbeck and his American agent, C. Lee Williams, over prices. News of the mother and baby, coming as it did shortly after the death of their second and genuinely born Baraboo calf, stirred the Ringlings to act.

On or about November 22, 1902, the

World's Greatest Show ordered the mother and calf plus six other Asian females ranging in height from 5'9" to 6'4" at the shoulder with an additional five to eight inches to their backs. (We referred to these eight elephants earlier in connection with Alice). They, together with four gelding dromedary camels, one female dromedary, and one male and three female German East African (Tanzanian) zebras, were shipped by Hagenbeck from Hamburg aboard the SS Patricia. It departed the German port on November 29th and, after a rough voyage, arrived on Sunday, December 14th at the Hamburg Line's dock in Hoboken, New Jersey.58

Hagenbeck and his agent Williams had urged the Ringlings to send an elephant car to meet the ship, Williams suggesting that it be delivered by the D. L. & W. (Lackawanna) railroad which had sidings close to the dock.⁵⁹ We presume the Ringlings did just that. The car returned home on Thursday, December 18, 1902 bringing all the animals except the camels which had to be left behind in New York for a required ten day quarantine.60 In addition to the elephants and zebras from Hagenbeck, the car brought to Baraboo one of the rarest beasts the brothers ever owned, namely, a female Sumatran rhinoceros that Al Ringling personally went to New York to purchase for \$5,000 from the Bronx zoo.61 It was the first rhino the show had ever obtained.

In one of his letters to the Ringlings, Hagenbeck called the baby elephant Sarah, in another Williama.⁶² Those names were much too bland for the alliterative art of press agentry. Inevitably, Baraboo and baby could not resist conjunction. Hence, she became Baby Boo which, when she grew up, was shortened to Boo. Meanwhile, her mother had shed her Hagenbeck moniker, Jenny, in favor of a new one, Veneta (also spelled Vaneta).⁶³

Boo did not long remain a Ringling animal. According to William Woodcock she was sold by the brothers in the fall of 1909 to William P. Hall of Hall Farm fame in Lancaster, Missouri. For most of this century's first four decades, that facility was a repository of used circus properties, serving as birthplace and funeral parlor for numerous small and often short lived circuses. Hall always had elephants on hand for sale, trade, or lease.⁶⁴ Boo became one of his rental elephants. At various times from 1915 through 1927 she was leased to seven different traveling field shows. From 1928 through 1934 she went out from the Hall farm for spot engagements at fairs, parks, and indoor cir-



A 1904 publicity photo of Baby Boo in winter quarters. Pfening Archives.

cuses. Hall sold her to Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell for their new Cole Bros. circus which debuted in 1935. She toured with them that year and the next. At some point in 1937 she was sent to the San Diego zoo (zoo records say in October);⁶⁵ and, according to the late elephant historian, Bill Johnston, she was euthanized (shot) there on January 1, 1939.

Boo was a notoriously dangerous animal and, over the years, injured at least six veteran elephant trainers. For detailed accounts of her career and infamous escapades readers are referred to the following: Chang Reynolds, "The Ringling Elephants" (cited previously); Bill Johnston, "Tough Circus Elephants," Bandwagon, January-February, 1993; and Edward Allen and F. Beverly Kelley, Fun By The Ton, Hastings House, New York (1941).

While Boo was developing her unsavory reputation, her mother Veneta was placidly passing her years with Ringling. At the end of the 1921 season, the combined Ringling-Barnum show shipped her and three other Asian elephants to Hagenbeck's zoo, Stellingen, Germany. So, after nineteen years in America, Veneta returned whence she had come. Bill Johnston (1993, cited above) said she went from Hagenbeck to the Frankfurt, Germany zoo and was shot there on October 8, 1942.

Quite obviously, the Ringlings' ruse with Baby Boo arose from the frustration they must have felt when their genuinely American bred calf was killed by its mother right after its birth at their Baraboo quarters in October 1902. Remember, they had tried their best to find

a substitute when little Ned died in February, 1901. They did not succeed then; but when they lost the second one, Hagenbeck had just what they wanted.

The deception with Baby Boo was well known in the show world. Anyone who read Billboard for December 27, 1902 could have seen the item on page 14 where it was reported that Hagenbeck's agent Williams had gone to New York to meet an animal shipment that included, inter alia, "one mother and baby elephant." In this scribe's judgment. it was the blatant sham with Baby Boo, more than anything else, that has prompted elephant biographers and historians to discount evidence pointing to the two genuine elephant births in Baraboo. By putting out a bogus claim that Baldy and Alice produced Baby Boo, the Ringlings laid the foundation for doubting their earlier assertion that the same animals begot Ned. And, that brings us to the final chapter.

BONA FIDENESS

That elephant calves were in fact born in Baraboo in 1900 and 1902 now seems irrefutable. For Nick's (Ned's) birth to have been a sham, the Ringlings and their staff would have had to trick the Baraboo Evening News reporter who saw him within hours of his birth⁶⁷ as well as others who visited him during his first few weeks, not the least of whom were the Governor of the State of Wisconsin and his entourage. Moreover, taxidermist and naturalist Ed Ochsner could hardly have been misled into believing he was working on the remains of a three month old calf if that were not really the case. Finally, the photograph of Ned published here, though not of highest quality, shows a recently born calf in your writer's opinion. For it to have come from abroad, an animal that young would have to have flown here on a jet airplane. And, when this baby was born, the Wright brothers were still scratching in the sand down at Kitty Hawk.

The fact that the second calf was killed within moments of its birth, standing alone, argues its bona fides. After all there was certainly no profit to be made from news of a failure in husbandry.

Regardless of the evidence and rationale presented herein, one may hold up an array of books and papers dealing with elephant births which, while not expressly denying the Baraboo births, damn them by negative implication. This was usually accomplished by presenting a list of authentic American bred and born calves that omitted the Ringling births coupled with the suggestion that reports of others were either bogus or unconfirmed. It is probably fair to say that,

for the most part, these writers were simply unaware of the facts presented hereinabove. Let us review some of the literature.

Charles Gates Sturtevant wrote an extensive paper, "Elephants Of The Circus," that ran in four installments in *White Tops* during 1931. Sturtevant was particularly knowledgeable about animals, being a



This illustration with fraudulent birth date appeared in 1903 Ringling Bros. newspaper advertisements. John Polascek collection.

member of the American Society of Mammalogists and of the New York Zoological Society. Moreover, he had been an avid circus fan since the 1880s and should have been aware of significant circus elephant events in 1900 and 1902. Yet his paper said nothing about the births in Baraboo. After describing the ones that had occured on Cooper and Bailey (1880) and Barnum and London (1882) plus the five from the Sells Floto animals, he concluded his treatment of the subject by saving that circuses had in the past succumbed to the temptation to announce the birth of an elephant at winter quarters when a very young animal had been purchased (White Tops May, 1931, p. 7). History certainly records enough such instances to have aroused Sturtevant's skepticism. Baby Boo was one. Others would include Admiral Dewey on the 1898 Walter L. Main Circus and Abe, a baby which Barnum and Bailey imported and slipped into its Bridgeport winter quarters in February or March, 1908, that being its first year under Ringling ownership.68

The Ways Of The Circus, Harper and Brothers, New York (1921) is an autobiography of George Conklin (1845-1924) as told to Harvey W. Root. Conklin was a

long time animal trainer and menagerie superintendent whose career with animals lasted from 1867 to 1908. Therefore, he should have known about any and all elephants born with circuses during those years. However, he said (pp. 135-136) that the two born in the early 1880s (Cooper and Bailey and Barnum and London) were the only real ones. Adding that it

had always been a paying proposition for circuses to claim births in winter quarters, he admitted his own role in the 1908 Barnum and Bailey hoax mentioned above. As to the Ringling births of 1900 and 1902, about which Conklin said nothing, we should point out that in those years he was with Barnum and Bailey in Europe so the news might not have reached him.

Fred C. Alispaw, who successfully bred Snyder to Alice and Mary on the Sells Floto Circus, producing five calves as a result, wrote a thorough account of those events which ran in four installments in *White Tops* from October, 1931 to June, 1932. There, Alispaw unabashedly asserted that his were the only ones ever bred and born, not only in America, but the entire Western Hemisphere! That is simply not true. Five others preceded his first one in

1912.⁶⁹ There can be no doubt that Alispaw knew about the Ringling calves because one of his assistants at Sells Floto, Chris Zeitz, had been a Ringling elephant keeper when the two were born in Baraboo. We must conclude that egotism influenced Alispaw's penmanship.

Ten years later, Edward Allen (an elephant man) and F. Beverly Kelley (a press agent cum writer) published their popular Fun By The Ton (cited above in connection with Boo). On the subject of elephant births, the authors seem to have been influenced by Alispaw. They suggested (p. 93) that Hebe and Queen, the respective mothers of the 1880 and 1882 calves, were both bred overseas. They said nothing about the Ringling births and wrote as though the Sells Floto babies were the first bred in America.

Another highly respected historian, George L. Chindahl, in his book, A History Of The Circus In America, Caxton, Caldwell, Idaho (1959), in a note on p. 155, listed only the five calves out of the Sells Floto elephants plus Columbia born to Hebe. He concluded by stating that reports of other births were of questionable authenticity, his dubiousness thus applying not only to the Ringling calves but to Barnum's Bridgeport as well.

We have mentioned Chang Reynolds' fine overview of the Ringling elephants (Bandwagon, September-October, 1968). At the time, he was the dean of the circus elephantologists and a first rate historian to

boot. Yet, his paper said nothing about the Baraboo babies.70

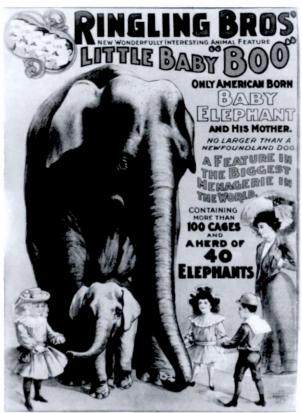
Your writer stepped up to the plate with "Hold Your Horses Here Come The Elephants!" published in American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums Regional Proceedings-1979, pp.199-223. He too struck out, suggesting that Queen was pregnant with Bridgeport when she was imported and saying nothing about the Ringling calves. In so doing, he followed the gospel according to his elders, namely, Messrs. Sturtevant, Alispaw, Chindahl, and Chang Reynolds. Worst of all, however, at the time that paper was written, yours truly had in his library a good account of Ned's birth in Baraboo which was published in this very journal (Bandwagon, March-April, 1956, p. 12) after an old clipping from the New York World that had been provided by Bill Kasiska of Baraboo. A note your author had appended to the article reads, "This should be investigated before relying thereon."

Other evidence of the Baraboo births has been around us for years, e.g., the 1900-1901 Billboard ac-

counts (see notes); two letters from John A. Rudolph, secretary of The Courier Company, to the Ringlings in February, 1901 expressing condolences over the death of the brothers' baby elephant (Pfening Archives); and Warren A. Patrick's 1906 Billboard article (cited earlier in connection with Ned) which was reprinted in the Cincinnati Enquirer, March 24, 1906. Patrick said that the Ringling calves were the third and fourth to be born in the United States. Additionally, Ringling attorney John M. Kelley told a group of circus fans, assembled in Baraboo for their 1933 convention, about the mother elephant killing her newborn calf; and his story was published in White Tops, Fall, 1933, p. 7.

Just last year (1992), in his book Big Top Boss: John Ringling North and the Circus, University of Chicago Press, at p. 3 and in a note on p. 311, David L. Hammarstrom referred to accounts of the birth and death of the second, unnamed calf in Baraboo. In the note he pointed out that historians doubted the veracity thereof. At least two prominent historians had reviewed a preliminary draft of the book and both had counseled against including the passage about the elephant birth.

A number of factors combined to push the Baraboo births off the pages and out of the perception of otherwise discerning writers and researchers. The births took place at winter quarters where only a few saw the calves. They occured at a rel-



Baby Boo lithograph used by Ringling Bros. Circus in 1903. Hertzberg Circus Collection, San Antonio Public Library.

atively remote location--Baraboo. The calves did not survive and represented a failure in husbandry, about which the lesssaid (by Ringling) the better. The babies were never taken on the road and therefore never ballyhooed. Instead, right on the heels of the real thing, the Ringlings made an "American bred and born" hoax of Baby Boo at a time when such was commonplace, thereby casting a pall of suspicion over any and all reports of elephant births in Baraboo.

In mid-1993, when your writer had uncovered the story of the calves in the Baraboo newspapers, he reviewed it with, inter alia, Tom Parkinson, Fred D. Pfening III, and William Woodcock, all of them astute historians. All were stunned like this writer as much as anything over the way we had all been ignoring obvious hints and clues. Fred Pfening III put it best, "We have been locked in an intellectual paradigm, adhering to old, erroneous beliefs while refusing to acknowledge evidence leading to new truths." Perhaps this paper will redeem us.

The writer wishes to thank all those who helped in this undertaking, most notably Joseph T, Bradbury, Atlanta, Georgia; Donald R. Carson, Lomita, California; Fred Dahlinger, Jr., Director of the Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Cen-

ter, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin; Guy J. Fiorenza, Rockford, Illinois; Leslie Gardner, Library Associate, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines; Keith McLaughlin, Janesville, Wisconsin; Fred D. Pfening III, Pfening Archives, Columbus, Ohio; John F. Polacsek, Detroit, Michigan; Kathy Waddell, Curator, Sauk County Historical Society, Baraboo, Wisconsin; William H. Woodcock, Jr., Ruskin, Florida; and John Zeller, Windsor Heights,

For brevity, references herein to the Pfening Archives, Columbus, Ohio will be "Pfening Arch." Those to the Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin will be "Parkinson Library."

1. The account of the birth on November 19, 1900 as here presented is a synthesis of information found in the following: Baraboo (Wisconsin) Evening News, November 19, 1900, p. 3; Baraboo (Wisconsin) Republic, November 21, 1900, p. 7; Billboard, December 1, 1900, p. 9; Frank M.Welch in Billboard, December 15, 1900, p. 18; Chicago Tribune, November 20, 1900, p. 4; Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) Daily Reporter, November 20, 1900; Madison (Wisconsin) Democrat, November 20, 1900, p. 1; and Baraboo (Wisconsin) Sauk County Democrat, November 29, 1900.

2. Sells Brothers 1881 route book, compiled by Wm. H. Wright, printed by Landon Middlecoff, LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

3. Baraboo Evening News, November 23,

1900, p. 3. 4. Ibid. Also see Frank M. Welch, op cit.

5. Baraboo Republic, op cit.

6. Baraboo *Republic*, December 5, 1900, p. 2; Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) *Daily Reporter*, November 30, 1900; Madison (Wisconsin) *Demo*crat, November 29, 1900, p. 1; and Madison (Wisconsin) State, November 30, 1900, p. 8.

7. Pfening arch: original orders for the lith-

ographs and correspondence pertaining thereto between Courier Company and Ringling.

8. Baraboo Evening News, February 18, 1901, p. 3, Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) Daily Reporter, February 18, 1901, Baraboo Sauk County Democrat, February 21, 1901, and Billboard, March 2, 1901, p. 5 1901, p. 5.

1901, p. 5.

9. Anonymous, The History of The Wonderful Baby Elephant, New York Popular Publishing Co. (1880), a booklet sold by the Cooper and Bailey Circus; Anonymous, "The Baby Elephant," New York Daily Tribune, February 4. p. 718. See also citations in Note (1), supra.

10. See Fred Alispaw cited in text under

"Bona Fideness.

11. Lee S, Crandall, The Management of Wild Mammals In Captivity, Univ. Chicago Press (1964) pp. 468-469.

12. Daphne Sheldrick in Elephants: Majestic

Creatures of the Wild, Consulting Editor Jeheskel Shoshani, Weldon Owen, Inc., Rodale Press,

Emmaus, PA. (1992), pp. 114-115.

13. Pfening arch: letters to Ringling Bros. from (a) Bartels on February 23, 1901, (b) Cross on February 20, 1901, and (c) Hagenbeck on February 22 and March 18, 1901, all of them confirming orders from Ringling for a very small baby elephant. Hagenbeck did send three elephants to Ringling in April 1901, but they were much larger animals.

14. Anonymous, "Baby Elephant is Dead,"

Billboard, March 2, 1901,

15. Baraboo Sauk County Democrat, February 21, 1901.

16. Erhart Mueller, *The Ochsner Story*, Gigerich's Sons, Baraboo (1988) pp. 45-46.
17. Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) *Daily Reporter*, February 21, 1901. Also, citation in Note (15), supra

18. Erhart Mueller, op. cit. 19. Anonymous, "Barnum's Baby Elephant-

Great Rejoicing Over Its Birth at Bridgeport,"
New York Times, February 4, 1882, p. 8.
20. Details regarding birth and death of
Ringling's unnamed calf from: Baraboo Evening
News, October 27, 1902, p. 3; Baraboo Republic,
October 29, 1902, p. 7; Sauk County (Baraboo,
Wisconsin) Democrat, October 30, 1902, p. 3;

Wisconsin) Democrat, October 30, 1902, p. 3; and White Tops, Fall, 1933, p. 7.

21. Anonymous, "Baraboo Elephant Breeding," Baraboo Sauk County Democrat, November 29, 1900; Anonymous, "Ringling's Baby Elephant," Billboard, December 1, 1900, p. 9; Anonymous, "The Other Baby Elephant," Billboard, December 8, 1900, p. 5; and Bingling Board, December 8, 1900, p. 5; and Bingling board, December 8, 1900, p. 5; and Ringling Bros., "A Decided Difference," Billboard, December 15, 1900, p. 4. 22. New York *Clipper*, February 24, 1883, p.

790 reported them as three large elephants.
23. Item on p. l of a May 8, 1894 unidentified newspaper (probably Dalton, Ohio Gazette) in Chindahl papers regarding Albert Wetter, Parkinson Library.

24. Des Moines (Iowa) Mail and Times, June 29, 1889 and Des Moines, Iowa Illustrated, Ushnell & Co. (1889) with description of 200 at p.

25. Portrait and Biographical Album of Polk County Iowa, Lake City Publishing Co., Chicago (1890), pp. 801-802; Des Moines Directory, (1891) zoo ad on p. 701; and Des Moines City Directory (1892) p. 555.

26. Des Moines Iowa State Register, June 23,

1889

27. Des Moines *Iowa State Register*, June 25, 1893. As to Irwin Bros. see: New York *Clipper*, February 4, 1893, p. 766; February 11, 1893, pp. 784 and 797; and March 11, 1893, p. 2.

28. For Irwin-Wetter nexus regarding Alice

see citation in Note (23), supra.

29. George L. Chindahl, "The Albert M. Wetter Circus," White Tops, November-December, 1953, pp. 3-7.

30. News item cited in Note (22), supra and

Salmagundi, May 11, 1894 in Chindahl papers regarding Albert Wetter, Parkinson Library. 31. Chindahl, see Note (29), supra. Also Chindahl papers, op. cit. (June 7, 1894 item).

32. Original documents relating to the three shipments of elephants (14 animals) are in Pfening Arch., to wit: Letters (a) from Hagenbeck's American agent E. D. Colvin to Ringling Bros. on March 5 and 18, 1901; (b) from Carl Hagenbeck to Ringling Bros. on March 18, June 15, and November 28, 1901 and January 30, 1902; and (c) from Hagenbeck's American agent C. L. Williams to Ringling Bros. on April 30, May 20 and 25, and November 20 and 22, 1902; also memorandum of agreement between Hagenbeck and Ringling Bros. dated January 2, 1902 and invoices from Hagenbeck to Ringling Bros. dated April 28 and November

28, 1902. 33. C. P. Fox and Ralph Hartman, "The Burr Robbins Circus," Bandwagon, November-December 1969, pp. 4-12; and New York Clipper, August 26, 1882, p. 374 and September 16,

1882, p. 419.
34. Fox and Hartman, op. cit., p. 6; Janesville (Wisconsin) Gazette, December 9, 1873, January 5, 1876, and April 21, 1881; Janesville (Wisconsin) Rock County Recorder, January 11, 1884; and Chicago InterOcean, August 30, 1887.

35. Unpublished manuscript by Burr Rob-

bins' daughter, China Lee Robbins (her maiden name), p. 91, in collection of Keith McLaughlin,

Janesville, Wisconsin. Also, Janesville (Wisconsin) *Gazette*, April 21, 1881.

36. Anonymous, "The Circus At Home-An Inspection of the Menagerie in Its Winter Quarters," Janesville (Wisconsin) *Gazette*, September 16, 1882.

37. Harry P. Parkhurst November 27, 1949 letter to George L. Chindahl among Chindahl

papers, Parkinson Library.

38. New York *Clipper*, September 16, 1882, p.

39. Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) Daily Reporter, December 24, 1887; Janesville (Wisconsin) Rock County Recorder, December 30, 1887; and Fox and Hartman, op. cit., p. 11.

40. Janesville (Wisconsin) Gazette, October 25, 1883 and April 16,1884; and New York Clip-

per, January 19, 1884, p. 749. 41. Chicago InterOcean, September 30 and October 3, 1888.

42 Ads in New York Clipper, January 12 and March 2 and 23, 1889.

43. Chicago InterOcean, May 9 and 28 and June 6, 1889

44. New York *Clipper*, July, 28, 1888, p. 314; August 25, 1888, p. 379; January 12, 1889, p. 699; and December 3, 1892, p. 623.

45. Chindahl papers regarding the McMahon

brothers, Parkinson Library.

46. Chang Reynolds, Pioneer Circuses Of The West, Westernlore Press, Los Angeles (1966) p.

47. Detroit Free Press, June 1, 1890 after Portland Oregonian.

48. New York Clipper, March 28, 1891, p. 49.
49. Earl Chapin May, The Circus From Rome
To Ringling, Duffield & Green, New York
(1932), p. 105.
50. New York Clipper, December 3, 1892, pp.

623 and 629.

51. George L. Chindahl, "The W. B. Reynolds Circus." White Tops, July-August, 1950, pp. 7-

52 Ibid. Also, Earl Chapin May, op. cit.

53. Chindahl, Note (51), supra

54. On p. 11 of their paper, Note (33), supra, Fox and Hartman indicated that Robbins did not trade Baldy to Grenier but, instead, sold him to the Ringlings. That does not comport with the 1887 accounts, cited in Note (39), su-pra, that Robbins traded everything, including his elephants, to Grenier. Further, evidence referred to in this paper clearly proves that be-tween 1888 and 1896 Baldy and Jennie were with, in turn, Grenier, McMahon, and Reynolds before going to Ringling. Even so, letters from former W. B. Reynolds officials Walter Adrian (6-1-1947) and Harry Parkhurst (11-27-1949) [Chindahl papers, Parkinson Library] suggest that Burr Robbins was involved in the elephants' sale to the Ringlings. Robbins, who was quite wealthy, was known to have backed several showmen after he disposed of his circus to Grenier. Perhaps he had a lien on the pachyderms in return for financial assistance to Reynolds whose circus was constantly in financial trouble.

55. Ringling Bros. 1897 route book, pp. 35-37;

and Detroit Free Press, June 10, 1900.

56. Charles Philip Fox, A Ticket To The Circus, Superior Publishing, Seattle (1959), p. 159, with photograph of Big Bingo, nee Jennie, in 1916.
57. Death date from Chang Reynolds via

Don Carson, Lomita, California. Billboard, June 8, 1918, p. 27, col. 1, reported the elephant's death but erroneously gave her name as Ella. Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, May 18, 1918 (p. 1) also had the name wrong, calling her Mig-nonnette. It reported that she collapsed in the street at 10:00 p.m. May 17th while walking from the showgrounds to the circus train and died where she fell at 1:00 a.m. on the 18th.

58. Pfening Arch: (a) letters from Hagenbeck to Ringling Bros. dated August 5, September 5, October 7, November 14 (with elephant list attached), and 24, 1902; (b) letter from Hagenbeck to his American agent Williams dated November 29, 1902; (c) letters from Williams to Ringling Bros. dated November 13, 20, and 22, and December 18, 1902; and (d) bill of sale dated November 28, 1902 from Hagenbeck to

Ringling Bros. 59. Pfening Arch.: letters to Ringling Bros. from Hagenbeck dated November 24, 1902 and from Williams dated November 27, 1902...

60. Anonymous, "Rare Animals Arrive To Make The Ringling Show Still Greater," Bar-aboo (Wisconsin) Evening News, December 18, 1902, p. 5 and letters from Hagenbeck agent Williams to Ringling Bros. dated December 18

and 20, 1902 (Pfening Arch.).
61. December 20, 1902 bill of sale from New York Zoological Society to Ringling Bros. for female Sumatran rhino (Parkinson Library). Also, Anonymous, "Rare Animals Arrive . . op. cit., where the rhino is erroneously referred

to as an African.

62. Letters dated November 14 and 29, 1902,

Pfening Arch.

63. List of elephants in Hagenbeck letter (11-14-1902) to Ringling Bros., Pfening Arch. Also Chang Reynolds, "The Ringling Elephants," cit-

Chang Reynolds, "The Kingling Elephants," cited in text regarding Alice.
64. For accounts of Hall and his farm see: Fred D. Pfening, III, "William P. Hall," Bandwagon, November-December, 1966, p. 4, and Tom Parkinson, "A Thousand Footnotes To History: Circus World Museum Presents the Plapers of William P. Hall," Bandwagon, in eight parts, January-February, 1973 to May-June, 1974. Part II (March-April 1973, p. 17) reported the sale of an unnamed elephant by Ringling to Hall in April, 1911. Another Ringling docu-ment stated that this sale was for two elephants for \$1350. Perhaps one of them was Boo.

65. There is some confusion over the date when Boo went to the zoo. October, 1937 would seem logical as Cole Bros. played San Diego on the 2nd and 3rd. However she is not mentioned in the list of elephants with the 1937 Cole show published by its elephant super-intendent Eddie Allen in his Fun By The Ton (pp. 52-56). Bradbury, in his history of the Cole show (Bandwagon, January-February, 1966, p. 24), indicates she went to the zoo around the

end of 1936 or early 1937. 66. William H. Woodcock Jr. records and Chang Reynolds, "The Ringling Elephants," cit-

ed in the text regarding Alice.

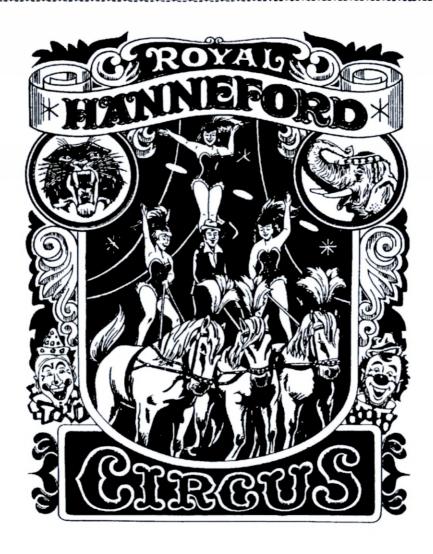
67. Baraboo (Wisconsin) Evening News, No-

vember 19, 1900, p. 3.

68. Admiral Dewey's supposed birth was an-68. Admiral Dewey's supposed birth was announced in New York Clipper, July 16, 1898, p. 321. Thirty-three years later Walter L. Main himself admitted his ruse in his paper, "My Experience With Elephants," Greater Show World, March 14, 1931, pp. 12-13. Barnum and Bailey made its claim (clippings in Barnum and Bailey press book at Circus Galleries, Ringling Museum Sarasota, Florida) only to have the New seum, Sarasota, Florida) only to have the New York newspapers expose the trick (see, for example, New York *Herald*, March 8, 1908).

69. In addition to Columbia and Bridgeport, bred and born in America in, respectively, 1880 and 1882, there were the two Ringling calves discussed in this paper, plus an Asian calf, Phua Victoria Portena, born on February 23, 1905 at the Buenos Aires zoo to Siam and Nayan who had been bred there. A photo and account of this Argentine calf may be found in Alexander Hauffelner, et. al. (European Elephant Group), Elephants In Zoo Und Circus, Karl Wenschow, Munich, Germany (1993), p.

70. Chang Reynolds and your writer, though not related, were good friends and regular correspondents. Once in the 1960s and again in the 1970s we compared notes about elephants born in captivity. What did we say about those born in Baraboo? Nothing!



Season's Greetings to our Circus Friends Everywhere

Tommy, Struppi and Nellie Hanneford



saluting



Grand and Glorious Years of the Circus In America

(1793-1993)

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THE GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS

Applaud The Members Of The

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOR THEIR CONTINUOUS EFFORTS TO KEEP THE AMERICAN HERITAGE OF THE CIRCUS ALIVE.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

WATCH FOR ALLAN C. HILL'S GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS

IN ITS ALL NEW
1994 SEASON

In November 1978 Todd L. Davenport sent the Circus World Museum the route and seven pages of notes on Elmer Jones' 1936 Cooper Bros. two car show on which he was employed as a workingman. In his letter to Bob Parkinson, then the Museum's Librarian and Historian, he wrote: "I have a kind of day by day account of that season. If I can find it and if you are interested, will send it on to you." Parkinson was interested, of course, and in late February 1979 Davenport mailed it to the Museum.

Little is known of Davenport. In another letter to Parkinson he noted: "I was on just about every kind of a show there was. I even was on a carnie one season, but on the back end on a Wax Museum Show. When I was a small boy I was with the family's riding act playing county fairs in Ken-

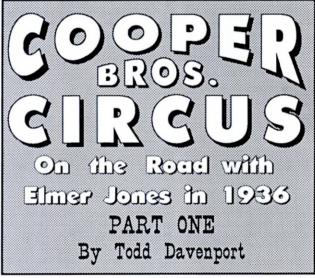
tucky and Tennessee. We moved from spot to spot just like the old days, on horse back and a horse drawn baggage wagon. My father's people were circus way back into Jolly Old [England]. Mother's people were horsey Kentuckians from Lincoln county." He was at least the third generation of his family in the circus business.

A cursory investigation by the Bandwagon staff failed to locate Davenport, and it is unknown if he is still alive. After his correspondence with Parkinson ended in March 1979, his screen goes blank except for this classic memoir of life in the boundocks of the circus business during the depression.

Playing the entire season in Canada, the 1936 Cooper Bros. Circus was the last two car show and the last circus operated by Elmer

Jones, king of the two car showmen. The following account of that tour begins with Davenport's notes on the show's equipment, logistics and personnel. His 123 page typescript narrative follows after a series of asterisks. The notes have been condensed; the narrative has been left virtually intact. Though awkwardly phrased in places and obscure in others, Davenport's writing shows a talent for colorful language and many telling observations. While his syntax, grammatical errors and all, has been unchanged for the most part, the text has been made more readable in places without, one hopes, changing his meaning or his lively style. Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and typographical errors along with run-on sentences, and sentence fragments have been standardized or corrected.

In 1936 Cooper Bros. traveled on two cars, a 72' coach and an 80' tunnel car. The coach had the cookhouse and dining area in one end, berths in the middle section, and state rooms and rest rooms in the other end. The 80' car carried all of the equipment and



animals. There were doors on one end that opened and runs would be laid to load and unload the light plant wagon. It was the only wagon that wasn't torn down and the pieces loaded. It was the first thing unloaded and the last loaded at night

There were two side doors on each side. From the end doors to the first set of side doors was the space allocated for the big show. The seats were piled on each side and the canvas, poles and stakes were tossed into the middle, leaving room for the light plant wagon. Between

Elmer H. Jones, king of the two car shows, as he looked in 1916. Pfening Archives.



the two sets of side doors was where the side show and the prop department stored their equipment. A wooden fence separated the two departments. Overhead was a bin where the advance paper was stored. Each department had its own door to load and unload through.

As on most shows everything possible was done to avoid confusion. Each department paid strict attention to its affairs. That is the only way a show can move. One end of the car housed the animals. There was four head of baggage stock, two riding horses, one mule, one donkey, six ponies, fifteen dogs and a bear. We loaded by oil lantern lights.

Both cars were painted green

with yellow lettering. The lettering was C. B. S. The coach was No. 7 and the tunnel car was No. 11. Possum bellies were under both cars. The big top was carried on two wagons from the Kramer Wagon Company in Oil City, Pennsylvania. These were new at the season's start. Richard Jones [Elmer's brother] took me with him to the Kramer works and bought them for \$85.00 each. I remember thinking what a lot of money that was and I reckon it was to a \$5.00 per week working boy.

They were well built, heavy and ponderous like any Kramer wagon. All there was to them were the running gears, reaches and tongues, and bolsters. The tent poles were laid across the bolsters to form a bed and the stakes and canvas laid

on the poles. They were taken apart each night and placed in the car. In the morning the parts were taken out and reassembled. Everything had to be handled four times a day.

The side show had an older Kramer wagon and the same system was used. The prop department also had an old Kramer wagon with a bed on it. None of these wagons looked very circusey, but they filled the bill. The light plant wagon looked circus. It was a Kramer, 14' in length, a box with a metal roof, sides with panels that swung up and a compartment to store wire and bulbs. It was painted red, the roof silver, the running gears and tongue canary yellow. With all the yellow paint we should of been hoodooed before we left quarters.

Richard Jones had a home and a large barn in North Warren, Pennsylvania. He was a horse dealer and knew horses and was very good to them. He furnished the horses for the show. The two work teams were Percheron, a pair of blacks weighing about 1800 pounds a piece, and a pair of iron

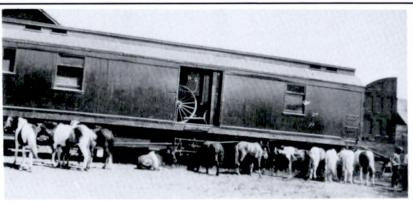
greys about the same weight. These animals were wonderful power. I can recall only three times that the working boys had to push on wagons.

This is how it went on a normal morning. The cars were spotted on a siding, and the loading incline was set up. The drivers would unload the teams. Pony Red and Capt. Irwin would get

out their stock. Little Chief would lead the bear out. Out of the side door wagon parts were handed down. The end doors were swung open and the the runs set up. The light plant wagon would be run down and a team would hitch on and start to the lot. Prop boss Curly Siefert's canvas wagon was the second on the lot. It had the pad room top and sidewall, poles, stakes, bandstand and chairs, prop tables and chairs, water pails, aerial rigging and two dog cage boxes. The three prop men would set up the pad room. Curly would stay and send the other two back to the train for the trunks. There were two loads of trunks and prop boxes. The side show boys loaded the top, sidewall, poles, stakes, ticket boxes, trunks, banners and the joints. There were two loads of seats. These were loaded by the drivers and Charlie Hoffman, the train master.

At night it was just the reverse. The sideshow was sloughed early and the equipment was packed away in the car. The boys would stay and help Charlie load the big top as it came. The blues were first, the red starbacks next, and the canvas last. The prop department loaded their own, with Curly staying on the lot while the two boys loaded the trunks. The props and canvas would reach the car and all that would be loaded. The wagon was then torn apart and loaded. The light plant wagon was the last off the lot. The big top wagons would be torn apart and loaded, then the runs would be set up and it would take all hands to push this heavy wagon into the car. There were two big World War I light plants in it. The runs would be shoved under it and the end doors closed. The show was then all set to take off down the high iron to tomorrow's town.

It was really something inside that car on the runs. Some of the boys had either bunks or hammocks which they made themselves. Some just flopped anywhere. The stench was powerful, what with the dogs, horses, the bear, old canvas, urine, manure and men who hadn't taken a bath for months. Then there was the odor of kerosene from the lanterns. We were so



This photo of an earlier Jones show illustrates the type of baggage car used on a two car show. Jim Dunwoody collection.

tired that we didn't lay awake grousing about it. I had a bunk up under the eaves and would fall asleep right away. The car had a wooden floor and sides and it would creek and groan when in motion. Once in a while, I would wake up for some reason, unexplainable, and listen to the sounds, a dog whining, the poor horses moving around to keep their footing, men talking and swearing in their sleep, the click of the wheels over rail joints, and the engine's whistle blowing way up ahead.

This is how the big show went. George Oram King was the announcer. No. 1 A banner announcement. No. 2 Parento, one of the clowns, on a box in the ring singing. A woman was the cause of it all. No. 3 Candy Pitch by Butch, the only butcher on the show. Can't recall his name. No. 4 The Aronsen Trio in the ring and Jules and Lee Barth on the stage doing a comedy knockabout number. No. 5 Swinging ladders with Peggy Ward and Marion Clarke. No. 6 Capt. I. G. Irwin and leaping greyhounds. No. 7 Prof. Billy Grant, contortion and balancing. No. 8 First concert announcement by Prof. King. No. 9 Barney Aronsen, balancing on the tight wire with Gertrude Cowley, attendant. No. 10 Capt. Irwin with dogs and ponies. No. 11 Josephine Barth on the trapeze. No. 12 Jennie and Billy Lerche on Roman rings. No. 13 The Barth family, tumbling. No. 14 Capt. Irwin, pick out pony. No. 15 Second concert announcement with cowboys, cowgirls and horses and mule. No. 16 Prof. Billy Grant on the Roman rings. No. 17 Billy Lerche and tumbling tables with Jennie Lerche. No. 18 Capt. Irwin and his high diving blind dog. No. 19 Clowns. Magic table with Jack De-Shon, Parento, Jimmie Cowley, Billy Lerche and Barney Aronsen. No. 10 Marion Clarke, butterfly iron jaw. No. 21 Clowns, baseball game. No. 22 Capt. Irwin and Pony Red with stubborn Irish Donkey. No. 23 Clowns, naughty boy gag. No. 24 Capt. Ir-

and trained mutts. No. 25 The Barth family tumbling on a pad. It was about a two hour

The concert had Peggy Ward, trick riding; Texas Joe and Marion Clarke, bull whips; Texas Joe, rope act; Pony Red and the unridable mule Diamond; Blondie Ward, bronc rider up on the outlaw stal-lion Cobalt. That was it, about a thirty

minute show.

The side show had Prof. George Oram King with magic, vent, and Punch and Judy; Miss Nellie King, the Beautiful Young Musical Genius; and Prof. King and Alisha Barth with the Chinese Water Torture. Virginia and Alisha Barth were the dancing girls in the annex. The kid show didn't have a band, so Nellie King would set close to the annex curtain and play a trumpet solo, entertaining the women and kids while the girls danced to the same tune. There was a large brown bear staked out, owned by Blondie Ward. Blondie sold beer and ale, iced down in pails in the cooch show dressing room. And of course there were the grifters and they really worked rough at times.

Frank Meister had the band, and mail and Billboard privileges. It was a fifteen piece, real old time circus band. I have seen a lot worse and smaller bands on some big shows. One thing can be said for Elmer Jones, he believed in having a good band and having a good clean, wholesome big show.

It took two weeks of hard work to frame up Cooper Bros. in North Warren, Pennsylvania. The show's two cars were spotted on a siding about one and a half blocks from Elmer Jones' brother Richard's barn. Some of the work went on at the barn and some at the siding. When W. W. "Little Red" Espey and I arrived, Blondie and Peggy Ward, and Texas Joe and Marion Clarke were the only ones there. They were living in an old carnie day coach, one end of which had a kitchen and a bar and the other had a wood burning range that was just about ready to fall apart. Elmer had ordered a new one from Sears & Roebuck. The middle section was taken up with day coach seats, rest rooms, and I think two state rooms and a small cubicle for the porter. The car was in bad shape. The roof leaked. It had been painted brown, but the paint was flaking off. On each side of the car was a red monogrammed "JS," which may have meant it had been on the Johnnie J. Jones Carnival at one time. I don't know.

I don't think the ladies were too happy

to see us as they were doing the cooking. The first job Red and I did was to paint the roof of the car with tar and the outside with green paint. We also ripped out the seats and tossed them out along the right of way and they soon disappeared. Texas Joe and Blondie were changing the interior into a living coach. Joe was a cabinet maker by trade and had a fine set of tools and Blondie must of picked up some experience as a carpenter somewhere. Most people thought that Joe was a Mexican, but I knew his background and some of his relations, one brother real well. They were a mixture of English and American Indian, and were natives of Warren. Joe had learned his trade at the old Warren Furniture Factory. He must have been cowboy crazy as a lot of lads were then. He worked up one of the finest whip and rope acts that I ever saw. He and Tom Mix were look-a-likes. Mix was from Mix Run over by Dubois, Pennsylvania, and was mixed with Indian also.

Warren was for years a good show town and there were lots of ex-show people living there, some retired, some still with it. I went to school my last four years in Warren, working different jobs part time. One was at the old Library Opera House which had live acts and flickers both. One of Joe Clarke's sister-in-laws had a cheap rooming house and I had a room there one winter. She was a real nice lady. I think that was the winter that Joe had a store show on the main drag. He rented an empty store and had western regalia on view and did some acts.

I had another part time job in a pool room where the proprietor let men gamble on tables in the back, and that is where I first met Elmer. He would come in there to gamble.

The new stove came into the New York Central station and Red and I took a team and wagon and went to fetch it. The old stove just went into a collapse, and was tossed out in the ditch. It soon disappeared.

Elmer spent a lot on knotty pine paneling for the coach. It had a cement floor and inlaid linoleum was laid down. The kitchen was in the front of the car. There was a stove, work table, and a cooler, and Pullman style berths for the cook and his wife. On the other side of the aisle were two booths that held eight at one time. This is where the working boys ate, taking turns as it were.

Then there was a partition, beyond which were four booths that held sixteen at a time. Over head were Pullman style berths for the band boys. Another partition had permanent two high berths. At the other end were the state rooms, one of which was an office with berths in it for the Jones family. On each platform were two 55 gallon drums for water. There



Elmer Jones and his long time office man Alex Sokolove. Jim Dunwoody collection.

were possum bellies underneath the car. A small light plant was in one of them and the car was wired for electric, but it wasn't used as the exhaust would come up into the car so what light there was came from oil lamps, lanterns, etc.

Some funny things occurred during those two weeks, but not funny to Elmer who was trying to frame up and get a show out with a small bank roll. He had bought a big top for \$200, and used a section left over from his Cole & Rogers Circus which he had out in 1934. It even had Cole & Rogers lettered along the eaves. After the purchased canvas came into the depot we hauled it to the barn and unrolled it in the side yard. The three brothers stood there, Elmer, Dick, and Alex. Elmer started to cuss because it was in bad shape. By this time more people had come in. Clark Bond, the best nut worker in the biz, was the sail maker. We sewed canvas by day out in the yard, and by night under the lights in the barn. All new side wall was bought.

Next came the debate about the center poles. Alex had a farm up along Jackson Run with some straight pines on it. Dick wanted Red and me to go up there and cut four poles out and peel them, but Elmer argued that they would be sticky all the season so he bought some oil well casing piping. There was just enough pipe for only three poles, so two middle sections were just laced together which proved to be a bad thing in wind as that huge center piece did a lot of bucking and jumping in a bad blow.

Elmer had been in partnership with a wild west showman in 1931. That trick folded at Springville, New York and the equipment was stored there. Dick, who had at one time had a livery stable in his

barn and had a big truck to haul horses, took Red and me up there and we finally got all that stuff back home. Among it was the light plant wagon. Inside the box was two old plants, World War I surplus, that Elmer had bought, all rusted. When we unloaded it, the box part just collapsed. The wheels, pole and running gear were all right though. Red and I worked with Joe Robinson, who had trouped out of Peru for years, and he did real good. We built a new box with a roof on it, and installed the light plants.

While we were working on the light plant, more people came on. The air around the barn was thick with bull. Stories were told and retold. One nut worker went about flexing his fingers and crying out that he could hardly wait to get up among them gullible Canucks.

They were hard put to find a canvas boss. Elmer had wired one Blackie Moore thirty dollars to come on. Elmer was worrying out loud one day because Blackie hadn't arrived. Joe Robinson told him that he didn't think that Blackie would come on. He had seen Blackie in St. Louie where Blackie told him that he was waiting for some money and when he got it, he was going to join the Cole show. Elmer cussed for a few minutes and went off and wired twenty dollars to Blackie Moorhead in St. Marys, Ohio to come on. He didn't show up either. I was on the Shannon show with Moorhead the next season and he laughed himself sick over how he had conned ole Elmer out of a double G. I told him that he better give Elmer a wide berth.

There was a black man with the show who had been with Elmer ever since he was a kid and was capable of handling the canvas job. But white men of that time wouldn't take orders from a black man, even the other blacks didn't like it. Willie Carter, the black man, was just helping out. Willie had been born and raised down in the Cajun country and could speak fluent French. He could have been an interpreter in them French towns we were going to play up North, but as he was black, this was nixed also.

James Knipsicker, better known as Scratchy, came in. He had been the canvas boss on the Sylvan-Drew Circus, so Elmer gave him the job. One of them White Line Whitey types came in. To hear him talk he had been on every show on the road and could do anything. By this time we had the light plant wagon done and Little Red was set to painting It. I was sent with this Whitey to sharpen or draw out the iron stakes. I had worked as a blacksmith, worked on oil rigs and was a helper to a mine blacksmith, so I had some idea of what to do. I set up the forge, anvil and quenching tank, and then the great man took over. He held the

stakes on the anvil and I drew them out to a point with a twelve pound sledge. When a stake was done instead of dipping it in the tank, he just tossed it on the ground. I wondered about this, but didn't like to say anything as he was unsociable. When we got through I asked him about not putting temper in them, and he blew up and went and got his little bag and caught a south bound freight, hollering that he had been on every show on the road and that he wasn't going to stay where there were nothing but lippy punks. I tried to work up my moral courage enough to tell Elmer that those stakes were not right, but he had other things on his mind for me, and I just kind of hoped that they would be all right.

All this hub bub came to an end on Saturday, May 16, when we got it all packed in the cars and the morning passenger train picked us up for the run to Dunkirk, New York. All the kids in the village and some dogs came down to see us off. I recall Charlotte Jones asking over and over "Where are the rough necks going to flop?" In one end of the car in bunks, and in hammocks built up over the livestock, that's where. And some just flopped on the canvas.

The weather had been perfect them two weeks and it held on that run. I understood that Elmer was moving it on thirty-five tickets. Most ticket agents and conductors accepted this, but once in a while there would be a nosey one who would count heads and raise the roof about it.

There was a hot box on the number two car and that slowed us down somewhat, but we made connections in Dunkirk all right and hustled along into Buffalo on the Central's main line, then on to Niagara and we all got across the border all right, except for Capt. Irwin's trained pig Susie. She was shipped back to his quarters in Paxtang, Pennsylvania.

We were set on the siding at Grimsby, Ontario in the late afternoon. We didn't know what title the show was using until we saw the paper up there. Nor did we know the name of the opener until we read it off of the station.

We moved onto the lot right off. Everything went smooth enough until they tried to drive the stakes. Some of them

bent, some split. And I had to face an irate Elmer Jones. I didn't want to throw the blame onto someone who wasn't even there. We had to get the black smith tools out of the car and set up shop on the lot. Willie and I worked till dark and some of the next morning to straighten out that mess.

Texas Joe was in for a tongue lashing also. He had made mud blocks for the pipe poles out of soft wood and they split when the weight of the poles and canvas came down on them. The seating was blues on the ends and on one side the red seats were star

On Sunday a towner told me that an old barn on the lot was where Ray Rogers wintered his show one year.

Elmer hired some Mohawk Indians as we had come across the border short handed. Most of them were a bunch of Romeos as many Indian girls came down to see them off, kissing and hugging them. Little Red and I tried to get in on this, but we were scorned by the maidens.

The weather held good on Monday at Grimsby and we done good biz. The old men went around shaking their heads and saying that it wouldn't last. They were right. It started to rain late at night and was still at it the next morning. We were laying over in the Toronto yards, and it came down heavy. We ate breakfast there. The next spot was Gravenhurst, over a hundred miles north of Toronto. We were hooked behind a local passenger train and it rained all the way. What with all the stop and go we never arrived till noon. The lot was only one block from the station, and somehow we got it on and set up for the matinee. We done good biz there. It was still raining when we moved off late that night.

The next morning in Bracebridge it was still coming down, only now we were farther north and the rain was cold. Five of the blacks blew there. The only blacks left in the working crew was Willie and one named Slick. We expected the Indians to leave also, but they didn't. The lot was a low, soggy one down by a bridge and it was a braced bridge.

Biz was N. G. There wasn't a matinee.

Burk's Falls on May 21 was next. The lot was up on a hill and the sun had come out, but a cold wind was blowing. Again no matinee. I whiled away the afternoon playing catch ball with the station agent's daughter. Biz was light that night. We were hooked onto just as soon as we were loaded. I kissed the agent's daughter good bye and she assured me that the

Illustration from the 1936 Cooper Bros. herald. Pfening Archives.



weather warmed up in July. I really hated to leave Burk's Falls.

Friday's town, South River, wasn't much, but biz was good. But it rained there and still was at it in Powasson on Saturday. Some of the girls and women hired a car and went over to Callender to see the Dionne quints and came back oohing and aahing about how cute they were. Biz was way off in Powasson. No matinee again.

The next morning, a Sunday, we woke up in the T&NO yards in North Bay, "The Metropolis of the North," or so it was billed. Monday's town was Cobalt, way to the north. We found that it would be late at night before we would be pulled out of there.

After dinner, no supper was served on Sundays. Pony Red, Little Red, Wagon Wheel Bob and I decided to prowl the skid row part of the city. We assumed that there was a skid row and there was. As we hadn't had a salary day as yet, we weren't over loaded with cash. It would be two weeks in the future before we got a pay, as Elmer used that two week hold back system. It was a cold, bleak day; the sky was overcast and the clouds looked like snow clouds.

We found a joint down in a basement run by a Frenchman. He told us that he would give us all the beans and greens we wanted for two bits, but that the wine and mademoiselles would be extra. We did get a bottle of wine but couldn't afford the mademoiselles. We left there quite late, as happy as could be. When we got back in the yards, the cars were gone.

I went into a yard office and the fellow told that a special had left north bound and had taken the show cars on to Cobalt, but that in two hours a freight was pulling out and to watch out for the bulls.

We made it all right and the next morning when it pulled through Cobalt we lit running and there were the show cars with the lads going in for breakfast.

What a hell of a place. There was a cold drizzling rain. The siding sat at the foot of a steep hill. The lake there was filthy from the over flow from the silver mine. The route to the lot went up a steep hill. We

had to push on the wagons. The descent to the lot was worse yet, down in between two ridges to a miners' baseball field, known as the Buffalo Slimes. Slimes was a fit name for it. We had to drive stakes at the top of the ridge and attach ropes to the wagons to hold them back. Later on that summer a carnival worker was killed by a runaway wagon on that grade. The lot was of a grayish sand and about two inches of

water covered it. But we set up in it anyhow. Of course.

Here is where the world renowned Hot Cakes Slim, otherwise known as Charles Heinrich, direct descendent of Mary Queen of the Scots who seemed to think he was a Prince in his own right, quit for the first time. You all have no doubt heard of "Angels" of the lots and waifs of the lots. Hot Cakes was no angel, but he could have passed as a waif. And that is the only reason that I could see why the otherwise hard boiled

Jones brothers put up with him. Their credo was, "if ya don't work, ya don't eat;" this came out with a snarl. They must of

had some pity for him.

Hot Cakes was on the side show along with Wagon Wheel Bob, Texas Lee and one of the Indians, Little Chief. The side show was set up on the right hand side of the midway, but on this lot the water was a little deeper on the right than on the left, so they started to set it up on the left. The fixer, Whitey Chapman, came on the lot and started to raise hell with them, asking them if they were trying to hoodoo the show. When they explained, he told them to dig trenches to run the water off. They had the top unrolled and laced together. They rolled it up in one piece and started to roll it across the midway. Every turn it accumulated more sand. Lee thought that Hot Cakes wasn't pushing hard enough and hit him. Hot Cakes hollered, "I quit," and ran off. For the next few days he rode the train and the good hearted cook fed him.

Cobalt was nothing but misery. There was no matinee. That evening the miners sat on top of the ridge and threw rocks at us. This brought on a clem. We finally got loaded in the early a. m. and was dragged up to New Liskard, only seventeen miles away.

Glory be, the sun came out and we were on a green, grassy lot. The haul was only a mile and on the level. But word soon spread out that [carnival owner] Patty Conklin's night riders had come in and either covered up or torn down our paper. I and some others was sent up into the town with window cards and we ballied the town, but the harm had been done, and ruined what might have been a a good date. We felt mean toward Patty.

After New Liskard we went into the boonies, into boom camps mostly. They all looked about the same, log cabins, corduroy side walks if any, deep muddy, rutted streets, sled dogs lolling about, people dressed in winter togs, but we made money in those spots. After a long, hard, cold winter they came out and that winter before had been a hard one. Where I was that winter was a long ways south of



The knock-down gilly wagon used by Cooper Bros. Circus. Jim Dunwoody collection

them spots, but it got down to forty below at times.

We made Earlton, Englehart, and Ramore on May 27, 28 and 29. This last was a hideous place with only a few cabins and the chant went up, "who in hell booked this blank blank place." They knew who booked it. It was ole D. C. Hawn. Yet people would glare at one another and ask that silly question.

On to Matheson and more of the same, only it was a little larger and we got good houses there. We awoke in Kirkland Lake to see a heavy, wet snow. This was a real town with side walks and frame houses. Someone hustled around and rented the ice rink and we moved into it. The side show was set up out in the snow though. I don't recall the seating capacity for that building but it was much larger than under the big top and it was filled for both shows, so we got well there.

I was helping out on the side show and it done real good also. Prof. George Oram King and his wife Nellie were old time troupers. He had a sword box and Punch and Judy, and she played a lot of instruments, some that she had invented herself. Her banner out front showed a beautiful young blonde girl, "Miss Nellie King, Beautiful Young Musical Genius." Alisha Barth was the girl in the sword box and she and her sister-in-law Virginia Barth were dancers in the cooch annex. There wasn't a side show band, so Nellie would play on a trumpet and kick a drum with one foot. She would be entertaining the women and kids and at the same time playing for the cooch. There was a large bear staked out in the side show and that was it, unless you counted the three grift-

There was plenty of grift over there, the three under the side show top, and a G wheel, a Big Tom and a jingle board on the midway. That Big Tom left quarters with twelve Cupie dolls and came back in with twelve. I don't know if anyone ever won anything or not. The inside grifters worked what was then high stakes. Like

\$40.00 on up. That was considered big money then. There was one fellow over there that I never did know his racket and didn't want to. He lived on the train. I would see him walking toward town with a brief case. He never done anything on the show. Late in the season on a Sunday, the grifters got into a row back in the coach on a run, and I never saw that fellow or one of the other grifters again. Whether they got off on their own accord or were tossed off, I never knew or cared to know. I

do know the grifter came up and rode in the stock car end for a while and I think he was trying to get the working boys to fight for him, but he had cheated them out of their money with dice pay day after pay day, so they wouldn't stick up for him.

I think at times that circus troupers are the oddest people on earth. There we were in Kirkland Lake in a fine building with steam heated dressing rooms and modern rest rooms, and all at once they were home sick for the pad room and the big top. They knew it was for only one day only, yet they griped. Jimmie Cowley came down with a case of lumbago and blamed it on the damp building. Marion Clarke tripped on a board and said that she had a sprained ankle. This couldn't have happened on a lot, she surmised. When she came on to go on her swinging ladder, she was limping. Billy Grant told her to quit it, to act her age and not go out before the tip limping because it would look like hell. She went on with nary a limp and her bad ankle was the one in the foot loop. She bowed off and walked off without a limp. The minute she got behind Billy's back she started to limp.

Jimmie and Trudie Cowley had a routine where she would leap through a hoop and was supposed to land astraddle of him. Instead she landed on his back, and him with lumbago, he just grinned until he got back stage then he carried on something awful. "It's a dead man, I am," and stuff like that.

We moved into Swastika and was once more under canvas. There was a lot of joking about the name of that place on account of Hitler. There was a new gold mine being opened there by Cornish men. The engineer was an Englishman and he told me those Cornish men went all over the world opening up mines. He said that they were good miners, but old fashioned, set in their ways and stubborn. They were boring shot holes by hand in the face of a cliff, and wouldn't use modern machinery. He gave me a chunk of ore that had gold, silver, copper and nickle in it which I carried for some years as a pocket piece until a girl in old Harlan, Kentucky filched it away from me.

Wavell, Monteith, and Porquis was just mining camps, but we done good biz in them. The days were chilly, but the nights were down right cold. Either we were in the permafrost belt or the ground had not thawed out yet as it was hard to drive stakes and when we pulled them at night the frost sparked on the steel.

Sunday, June 7th, we moved in Cochrane for Monday's date. We bid good bye to the TN&O and was back on the Canadian National. This was an older town with side walks, but dirt streets. It was a mining town. We got in trouble shortly after the cars was spotted on the siding. A rough bunch of guys were hanging around, making snide remarks and asking where was our horses and things like that. Blondie Ward walked by them and one called him a drug store cowboy. Blondie hit him so hard he bounced when he lit. That was unfair as Blondie was raised on a cattle ranch in Oklahoma and never dressed flashy. In his old beat up hat and scuffy boots, he was a handsome man, with a mop of yellow curly hair, blue eyes, broad shoulders, slim hips, but bow legged and pigeon toed. He was over six foot, but if his legs had been straight, he would have been six foot six. He was a real good fellow, usually happy and easy going.

When he hit that miner, that opened the fray and things were kind of bad around there for a few minutes. They left but made a lot of threats. We moved onto the lot and stood guard. Nothing happened that night or the next day, but at night they came out against us and we fought our way out and got loaded. A switch engine took us west for a few miles and set the cars on a siding. Then, we thought that we were honor bound to protect the ladies with us. Now I realize that they were quite capable or taking

care of themselves.

We went onto Smooth Rock Falls. Biz was just so-so there. Fats, one of the drivers, slammed into a car with a loaded trunk wagon, causing some damage. Now this Fats was holding hands with a girl with it who had been Dick Jones' house keeper. She took up reserve seat tickets to earn her keep. I had went to school with this Mary. I had noticed her and Fats mooning around, but didn't say anything to anyone.

Ever since we had left Cobalt, Hot Cakes had been sneaking aboard the car at night and the cook fed him on the sly. The rest of us kind of resented this as the meals were scant anyhow. Dick Jones had been doing all the buying, food for the cookhouse and forage and grain for the animals. He believed in feeding the animals real good, but figured that humans was better off not to over eat and he made bloody sure that we didn't. I took him to

task about this one day and he said, "how are you going to tell a hungry animal that it can't have more to eat?" At one supper time the cook ran out of food before everyone ate. This caused such an outcry that Elmer had to take on the chore of buying food. After that we ate some better, at least there was enough to go around.

In Fauquier the lot was in a cow pasture. We had to ford a creek to get to it. This was a lumber jack town and quite a few of them were in town celebrating. One fellow was all lit up on the lot wanting to pick fights and raising hell. He didn't attack any one, so no one took him serious. Fats had disappeared and I took over his team for that night. I was in the pad room putting on their harnesses. There were two drunken jacks in there and I got into an argument with them. Marion Clarke heard me swearing and called out for me to watch my self just as they both jumped at me at once. They had me down and was punching the pudding out of me. Marion came out of the ladies dressing room with a bull whip and when she started in on them, they left in a hurry. Then she gave me billy hoo for swearing when there were ladies present. I didn't argue back with her.

The light plant wagon was always the first on the lot in the morning and the last off at night. That night I drove it down to the creek bank and started to ease it down over the bank. The horses stopped and wouldn't go on. When I spoke to them, they just snorted and tossed their heads. I got down to see what the trouble was and there laid that drunken jack, partly in the water and partly out. I dragged him out on land, but I hated to leave him there in such a condition. I jammed him into the

Peggy Ward and Marion Clarke in the 1936 Cooper Bros. back yard. Jim Dunwoody collection.



rear compartment, latched the door on him, and plumb forgot all about him.

The next morning in Moonbeam, I spotted the light plant on the lot and got up on the horse for the trip back to the siding. All at once, I could hear Joe Robinson swearing and I saw him jerk the jack out onto the ground. I took off for the train.

On my next trip back with the prop and canvas wagon, there was the jack working under the kindly Scratchy. He had joined out and stayed with it till it closed. Moonbeam, as we called him of course, made a good hand. Before the day was over, Joe gave me the third degree about how did that jack get in amongst his wiring and bulbs. I just didn't know a thing about it. That Joe wasn't a man to trifle with. He was one hard little man. A few days before he had wanted to slit my throat because I had hung a lantern off of the wires in the car. But he was a good man in lots of ways and he and I were friends for many years afterwards. He had worked for years on them Corporation shows out of Peru and I enjoyed listening to his tales.

One was about getting cross wise of old John Ringling over not turning out one stormy night in Philly to keep Lillian Lietzel's top from being blown away. He was real vindictive toward Joe for this and chased him himself. That was Joe's story anyhow. After Ringling bought out the Corporation, if he came on the lot for a visit of whatever show Joe was on, Joe would duck and dodge around him.

In Kapuskaseing, Fats surfaced with Mary on his arm. They had ran off and got married. What an uproar that caused. The word spread quickly. I guess that Elmer didn't give a damn, but Dick and Mrs. Elmer did and they were chased. We took up a collection for them. Curly, Fats' brother, didn't want to give anything, but Mrs. Elmer saw that some money was taken out of his salary as she was anxious to get Mary away from Dick for a reason that came to light years later. So the happy couple blew for parts unknown.

We hadn't had a salary day as yet and this collection had to be taken out of our first pay of the season.

The next tidbit of gossip was that Hot Cakes had been pressed into driving Fats' team. This relieved me to go on the big top. It did seem that they were always short of help and that the canvas was always heavy. We were still going through a bad period of weather and would take it down sopping wet at nights and there never seemed to be enough sunshine in the morning to dry it out.

Scratchy had got the rep of being a driver and a bucko lad. He was a nice enough fellow when the equipment was loaded, but he seemed to go mad when the big top canvas and pole wagon rolled

on to the lot. I put the blame on the fixer for some of this. He gave Scratchy some advice that I thought was bad from the start by telling him not to lift a hand, but just to shout out orders.

There were some high strung, sensitive lads on the big top crew, and they didn't take much to be hollered and sworn at. When I went on it at Mattice on June 13, the other men on the big top included Pony Red, a wild Donegal Irish lad; Tiger Jack, late of his Majesty's Navy and the former light weight champ of the Home Fleet; two Indians, Doc and Bob; and Robert E. Anderson, who claimed he was an author getting material to expose Yankee showmen coming into Canada to fleece the natives. Anderson was also a pilot in the Canadian Air Force reserves and was to be shot down and lost over the English Channel during the Battle of Britain. Others on the crew were Pop Eyes, a one eyed Nova Scotia fisherman who had left the sea for reasons of his own; and two blacks, Willie and Slick. So Scratchy had some hard men in his gang.

How an otherwise smart Yankee like Dick Jones ever let a big city boy like Hot Cakes go on as driver, I never could figure out. He didn't know the first thing about horses, and he didn't seem to be anxious to learn either. He didn't last long. Red Espey was a farm boy and real good to and with horses. He was hot headed toward humans but was always kind to animals. He and Dick Iones had a little war going on about the feed sacks. They cost a nickel a piece, and because Dick would have to pay a nickel deposit on the bags when he would buy oats and bran, he would try to save them to turn in on the batch he bought. Just as soon as a bag was emptied some performer would grab it and use it to stand on while he bathed. This caused Dick to go mad and he blamed it all on Red. Red wouldn't take his abuse, so it was a battle in every town with them.

One thing I will say for Elmer was that he never seemed to bother about what went on in the back yard. He left what troubles there were back there to Billy Grant, the equestrian director. He had his hands full up front and was hard put to find time to sneak away from Mrs. Jones to get into a poker or crap game.

Business was good in all of these spots despite the cold, gloomy weather. In Kapuskaseing the sun shone a little and the matinee was a sell out with a good house at night. In Mattice the people did turn out and in such a little place, but the weather kept sour. When we left North Warren the leaves were all out on the trees, but in this land we were trouping across the buds were just trying to come out on some trees. The natives were a

rough, dirty looking bunch; they still wore their winter togs.

The working boys got into the habit of gathering out back of the side show twice a day. The fixer wouldn't let them on the midway. Nellie King would play a medley of Stephen Foster's songs on an instrument she had invented herself. We would stand there and listen to the music.



The Jones children, Elmer, Jr., Charlotte and Corky in 1936. Jim Dunwoody

I don't know about the rest, but it took me south of where we were, down across the Ohio River to a place, that was much warmer and softer than the harsh land we were trouping through.

On a Sunday run of 163 miles to Nakina we were hooked on the tail end of a freight. Just ahead of us were two provision cars with food for the Indians. The train would stop and men in the car would hand out food to a group of waiting Indians. All these stops irked us as this was to be our first salary day.

The living conditions on them two cars wasn't too fine. We bunked in one end over the live stock. We tried to keep an area by the doors cleared which we called our "Parlor." But what with wagon wheels and other parts, and all kinds of bric-a-brac including a pit show top that Elmer hoped to find something to put in it, it was hard to keep a small space cleared. The boys resented the grifters coming and using that space for their poker games. We had to fight our way out of some spots on account of the grift.

The ghost walked in Nakina on June 15. Elmer had a funny way of paying off, just allowing one person at a time in the office. No one knew just how much anyone else got. I, for instance, got \$5.00 per week, some only got \$3.00, and one only got \$2.50. I was last in line and he gave me \$3.00 in change, deducting \$2.00 for Fats and Mary's collection. He asked me if the canvas was heavy. I told him it was, that it nearly had my back broken. He said that he had thought of sending me up ahead with a bundle of paper as old Patty [Conklin's] men were still covering our paper, but seeing as the canvas was heavy, maybe he could send some one else. I wasn't crazy about going up there and being found by Patty's opposition brigade and be beaten up into a pulp.

The worst aspect of being paid off was Mrs. Jones and the eldest children setting there giving one the old dog eye, as if one was just taking the bread out of their mouths by taking advantage of easy going, warm hearted Elmer. That is the impression that I got anyhow. Mrs Jones' lament was that she was a young woman, married to an old man, with three young children to fend for and that she was surrounded by crooks and thieves. There was Charlotte, about twelve; Elmer Jr., age ten; and Corky, about five who was a cute, loveable, little boy and everybody with it just loved him. I made arrangements with Elmer to put my money into an envelope with my name on it to be put in the safe until season's end so I wouldn't have to go in there on Sundays. My wants were simple, one meal per week in a restaurant and tobacco. He paid me a penny for every window card that I could pick up in the towns in the evenings.

Nakina was drunk day on the show. At that time in Canada, the Bright's Winery put out a Catawba wine for \$1.35 per Imperial gallon. It was real good and beat bootleg hooch by a long country mile. The cook had beer and ale for sale and Blondie Ward had the beer concession in the

cooch annex.

It was in Nakina that I over heard Elmer interviewing a prospective employee. It went like this: "What show you just come off?"

"Conklin & Garrett's." "What did you do over there?" "I operated a joint." "How's old Patty?" "Oh, he is all right." "What did you leave for?" "Patty chased me." "Why?"

"He caught me stealing."

Elmer hired him and put into a position where he could take his best holt, if he so desired. He was a good looking boy with an honest face and was neat and clean looking. He was given to understand though that he would have to help to set and to tear down the house and was put into the job that Mary had on the reserve seats. So Toronto Bob joined us.

Another odd thing happened in Nakina. Old Capt. Irwin came up to me and asked me if I could read. Of course I could. He acted real secretive. He took me back of the pad room and gave me a letter. I saw that the return address was the Commandant's office of West Point's Military Academy. I read the letter to Irwin. It said that Irwin's son had graduated among the top ten of his class and it was quite an honor and the writer thought that any father would be proud and happy to hear the good news. All I could say was "my gawd Capt., my gawd." I thought he would be real happy at such news. He was not. He went into a tirade: "The dirty little ungrateful chump, after I taught him all he knows. The rubes have got my boy, the dirty stikin' rubes, he will be just another of Uncle Sam's dogs

be just another of Uncle Sam's dogs from now on." He put a match to the letter and swore me to secrecy.

If you think that Irwin was an old time circus man you are right. He was born somewhere on a lot, he didn't know where. He wasn't even sure what country it was in, but he thought it was either in Ontario or New York state. He had trouped with the Barnum & Bailey outfit for years. He always referred it as the Barnum show. He had a cat act for some years. A leopard had torn off about half of his left arm and he went into training small animals.

Alex Jones had the concessions with it and employed just one butcher, known as Butch and that was it. Alex was a character. I was talking to him one day and he amazed me, claiming that Elmer was too big hearted and lenient and had far too much excess baggage with the show. He told me about a one car show he had out in 1914. I asked him how in hell could a show be loaded on one car and was it a Tom show or a reptenter or what? He said, no, it was Stone & Murray's Circus. And it was simple, the cookhouse and berths were in one end of the car, the equipment and animals in the other end. One team of horses and one wagon moved it on and off. He said that they went up into Minnesota and the Dakotas and came in with a barrel of money.

We done good biz in Nakina. But during the night show a cold rain set in and what with having so many drunks we had a time get in getting off.

The next day in Long Lac there was a lot of abuse heaped onto the working boys heads about their drunkenness. But it seems to me that it was a case of the pot calling the kettle black. There was much drinking in every department. The band didn't sound right. Red Espey, who sticked on Clark Bond's nut game in the kid show, told me what an ass the fixer had made of himself. Prof. King used a little black dummy out on the bally. When he got done with it he handed it down to the fixer to take back inside. Red said it was quite awful that Bond stood there so

drunk that he was holding onto the little table with both hands and the fixer came staggering in with that blasted silly looking dummy in his arms. Red said the tip was mostly mostly women and kids and the fixer started to yelling at Bond, telling him that he was nothing but a punk and that he had operated a nut game while Bond was still in diapers. Red said that he and another timber were appalled at such goings on. Bond stood there—a silly look on his face. All at once he just collapsed, table and all. The fixer passed out on his feet. The lads dragged the bodies out under the side wall and later on he was

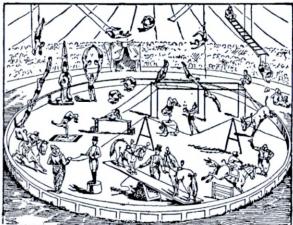


Illustration from the 1936 Cooper Bros. Circus herald. Pfening Archives.

loaded on the first wagon to the cars. I heard that some of the performers showed signs of being drunk also.

I can't recall much about Long Lac. There was a lake there and it may have been long. It was more of the same, spruce trees, muskeg, over cast skies, crummy looking natives. It was there that I was talking to a fellow while a louse played tic-tac-toe around his neck and another one came up through the hairs on his chest to join the other one. This display made me crawl all over and I got away from him. There used to be a belief among old show folks that if you were having a run of bad luck, if you got crummy your luck would change for the better. I never went along with that.

It was in Long Lac that we were told that tomorrow's town was a month-old gold boom camp. I thought that should be plumb interesting. That night it rained and at times wet flakes of snow came down with it.

Charlie Hoffman, the car loader, told us to behave ourselves on the run into Geraldton as a Mountie would be riding in the caboose. There had been some trouble there.

When we woke up in Geraldton, a cold rain was falling. What a helluva of an as-

pect. We sat on a new siding across the mainline from the camp. It was just a huddle of new cabins, tents and hovels. We had to build a grade crossing to get into the place. While we were unloading the car a bunch of yaps stood around yelling for the girls. One of the girls started across the tracks and found her way blocked by a crowd that wouldn't let her through. She got back on the car in a hurry. Meanwhile we were watching this real close. We didn't want to start anything if we could help it.

The mine itself was back in the bush about a mile, but the camp was out by the

track. A road that led back to the mine was the camp's only street. The side walks were of corduroy, but the street was just a mud hole. All the cabins were made of peeled spruce poles that hadn't time to weather. One, a two poled affair, was the hotel and cafe. One fellow had started a bakery under a tarp and had a beehive sort of oven made of dirt and stones. The lot was on the opposite side of the camp from the siding. It had been laid out for a baseball diamond. It was too small for us and we had to cut some brush and dig up some stumps, and by leaving out one section we got it all on.

We soon found out why the Mountie had come in. The Mountie who had been on duty there was murdered the day before. Someone had hit him over the head with a beer bottle and stabbed him. The Mountie who had come in with us took off in the bush after the killer.

The fixer, after his drunk of the day before, acted like a nervous loon, going from working man to working man, begging us not to start anything as we would be wiped out. That was a tough hole of a place and he didn't think that it would make a good winter quarters. Of course we didn't want to start anything either. Hot Cakes proved his ineptness here, having to go over that jerry built grade crossing and down that quagmire of a street onto a boggy lot.

The men kinkers escorted the ladies back and forth to protect them. They traveled in a group. And there was danger. Yet there was women in the camp, good looking ones, I thought anyhow. I went into the cafe to get a cup of coffee and the girl who served was a blond goddess. She was at least six foot tall with big blue eyes and a peaches and cream complexion. She even wore her hair in braids. She far surpassed anything on Cooper Bros. Great Circus. But she, I found out, was a Finn who couldn't speak English, so it came to naught.

The matinee was a sellout and the front yard did good biz also. The grifters worked here, there was no one to fix either. The cooch done real good. The band boys went up and played in front of the cafe, but were not invited in for a free drink and they were disgusted.

The weather was cold and the sky overcast, and some one said it felt like snow. It was June 17th and it must have been warm some place.

After supper things started to pile up on us. There were guys hanging around trying to get into the ladys' dressing rooms. They were drinking and foul mouthed. The fixer was scuttling about trying to keep peace, but we had taken and taken and were in no mood to take any more.

There were sled dogs in the camp and wolves back in the bush. The wolves got to howling and the sled dogs were answering them. The animals on the show got awful nervous. I was in the pad room with the horses and ponies trying to give them some comfort. I had got into the habit of harnessing Red's team and driving them up back of the side show and hitching them up to a wagon, so all he had to do when the games were over was to come out and take them over. The side show was sloughed first and loaded quick. I think that was in case some clipped sucker went yelling to the law. By the time he and the officer got back, there wasn't nothing but a bare spot and this also saved the officer much embarrassment. No evidence, no case.

That evening Prof. King had quite a time making himself heard on the bally because the dogs and wolves were making such a racket. He had a loud and sonorous voice but he had to go up several pegs to get above the opposition.

There was a full house again at night and we wondered where they came from. Some of those people must have seen it twice. We had several fights out along the stake line, but there wasn't any mob to deal with as yet. We figured that they would jump us when the show was over, but a cold rain mixed with snow set in and the rubes must have holed up somewhere, leaving us in peace to get it off and loaded.

Hot Cakes got stuck on the grade crossing as a train was coming in to stop and pick us up. We could see the head light and the engineer was blowing the signal that he was going to stop. Hot Cakes set up there with the lines hanging loose saying foolish things like: "All together boys, it's not too loud." Dick Jones came by and sized it up and swore at Hot Cakes, telling him to get the hell down from there. Cakes said up your giggy with a center pole old man. Dick crawled up and tossed him off and took hold of the lines and talked to the horses, straighted them out, and they pulled it out and across. Dick was mad, he told Hot Cakes: "You no



Letterhead used by Cooper Bros. in 1936. Pfening Archices.

good stupid son of a bitch, you'll never drive on this show again." Then he turned on me, saying "what the hell are you doing, Davenport, you're a horse man, why in hell didn't you take them lines away from him?" I told him that I hadn't hired Hot Cakes, that I had been told time after time that I didn't have any authority, that I was just a blot of grease on Jones' Great Show and felt that I didn't have any right to take anything away from anybody. He was so mad that he looked as though he was going to have a stroke.

Beardemore, the next spot, was a boom camp also, but it was all of three months old. The lot was in between the siding and the camp, but as I didn't go up into it, I never saw it. The snow had quit, but it was still raining when we moved on the lot. There we were met by a delegation of concerned citizens. They didn't mince words, telling told us that they would let us set up, let us put on a matinee and then if they didn't like it they would tear the show apart, dribble our hides down the rail road tracks, and set fire to the cars, but they wouldn't harm the ladies. Them, they would keep for their own pleasure and comfort, or words to that effect. It was so ridiculous that we got to laughing and they got to laughing and the rain stopped and glory be the sun came out, albeit a weak looking one, but better than no sun at all.

We done good in Beardemore, two good houses and tore down and moved out without any trouble.

The next day we were out of the boonies for a spell. Nipigon on June 19 was an old established town. The lot was on an inlet of Lake Superior. It had grass on it with some wild flowers even, and the sun really came out and it had warmth to it, the first warm day since leaving Grimsby a month before.

A lot of the people were sick. Those who had malaria at one time or the other had it come back to them, including me. It sure did hit me hard at times. I got some quinine and bought some whiskey from a bootlegger. It was terrible stuff, made back in the bush. Canucks didn't seem to

know the art of making good whiskey. Those who tried making it on the q. t., that is. The distilleries put out good stuff, so I have been told. My mother and her people believed in whiskey as a cure-all, but that was good old Kentucky bourbon or stuff that was made back in a hollow by people who took pride in their work.

The brothers didn't let his royal majesty loaf about. Old Hot Cakes was put on props, and a prop boy, Tommy Dunn, went on driving. Tommy was an old sod harp, and he was real good with horses and knew and understood them.

I never could quite figure out why the prop department was so short of help. Whether it was Elmer's idea or Curly's there were just three men to do all that work. Curly might have wanted to keep expenses down in his department. He was an odd person. In spite of the crowded conditions he managed to be a hermit, not having any buddies, nor wanting any. He wouldn't even give anyone the makings of a cigarette. But in turn he never asked anyone for anything either.

The prop boys day went something like this. The wagon parts were handed down out of the car, and were assembled. The wagon had planks for a bed. The poles, stakes and canvas for the pad room was loaded. Then came all the bric-a-brac, such as rigging, water pails, folding chairs and tables and on the rear two dog cages. This wagon and that load was one of Elmer's pet peeves. Every time he saw it en route to or from the lot he would snarl and look the other way. It was an awful looking thing.

When they got to the lot, the pad room would go up and everything would be unloaded. The two boys would go back to the car to get the trunks. There were two loads of them. Curly would stay on the lot. When the big top started to go up they would rush in their stuff. All this would take until almost dinner time on a normal day, but there were lots of days that were not normal at all.

The big show ran about two hours with announcements. The after show lasted about one half hour. Everything had to be cleared out for this. Then they would have to put it all back up for the night show. As fast as it was used in the night

show it was packed away on the wagon. Then came the two round trips to the car with the trunks.

Curly would usually get the top down and even rolled up and the stakes pulled by himself, if the hauls were long ones. They would get all that stuff loaded, tear down the wagon and load its parts, and their day was done, at times twenty hours after they started it.

Biz was good in Nipigon, and we tore down on a star lit night and loaded it up for the run to Fort William. We were really and truly getting into civilization. In the early morning we sat in our parlor and could see the nice homes and streets of Port Arthur.

While the train was rolling along at a slow pace, all at once Toronto Bob said: "Why, there is Conklin's," and sure enough there was Conklin & Garrett's [Carnival] set up a lot. It was a big nice looking outfit. Their train was spotted on a siding close by and we counted twelve cars, sleepers and big baggage cars, so it must have been a gilly show at that time. In Fort William some of the carnie folks came over and paid a visit. Ole Patty [Conklin] was one them. He appeared to be shocked at the news that his men had been tearing down our paper. He assured Elmer that he wasn't going farther west that year and Elmer would have everything west to himself as far as he was concerned.

Then he tried to steal some of the help away, telling them that they were wasting their time on such a small show and how well they would do on his big show etc. He didn't offer to take Toronto Bob back into the fold though.

No one left, but we did lose Slick there. He went to Chicago by boat to join Tom Mix. Some one opined that he would have to do different over there than he did over here, as that Dennie Helms on the Mix show wouldn't put up with his monkey shines. I reckoned that Slick carried his weight while with us by keeping up the morale. No matter what he always managed to do or say something to make the boys laugh. One little tough Limey who was with it for a spell said, "that bloody arsehole ape in human form doesn't earn his ruddy rations even. On nights during the tear down he has one eye on the northern lights saying: 'My, ain't them purdy' and the other eye on the ground looking for cigarette butts." Slick was more amused than mad though. I met him the next March in the Peru quarters and he told me that was the most lonesome trip he ever made, cooped up on a boat with nothing but rubes.

He made the rest of the season on the Mix show. He told me that Helms was hot headed but he got along all right with him. It closed in Alabama and as Slick didn't like that old Southern Hospitality, nee chain gangs, prison farms etc., he hustled up to Cincinnati and holed up there.

Curly and Hot Cakes didn't get along too good, I think that Cakes was still a growing boy and at times got weak spells and Curly couldn't, or wouldn't, understand that and thought that Cakes was just lazy.

The sun shown in Fort William and the people turned out. We changed from the Canadian National there onto the Canadian Pacific. The Sunday run on June 21 was 147 miles to Ignace. What a name, what a place. We were back in the bush once again. Poor biz here and the gri-



Jennie and Billy Lerche in 1936. The Cooper big top is in the background. Jim Dunwoody collection.

peing started with, "who in the hell booked this damn place?" Whitey Chapman, the fixer, said it was small but had a big surrounding country. He was right it was big, but no one lived in it. There wasn't even a dirt road into it.

Dryden, Tuesday's town, was a real burg, a flour mill town. The lot was on the end of the main street from the tracks. It had some pavement and cement sidewalks. I was walking along behind the prop wagon and could see Elmer up ahead, kind of window shopping. When the wagon went up near him the rear left iron tire came off the wheel and rolled up onto the sidewalk, just missing him. It laid down with a clang in the vestibule of a store. Elmer looked around and he looked up like he was insane. In a low voice he said: "Oh vou sons of bitches, you no good bastards you," then he hurried off up the street. He and Curly had a go round on the lot later on. Biz and the weather was good there.

Kenora was another nice, flour mill town. The lot there was on the other side

of town from the tracks. The road was black topped with a high crown in the middle. A light rain was falling in the early a. m. I had walked to the lot and was waiting for the canvas wagon when a boy came on laughing and told me the news. He figured that Tommie, who was driving the canvas wagon, was either drunk or asleep and somehow lost control and the wagon slipped and rolled down over a bank to a lawn and up onto a porch smashing it into kindling wood. The horses were all right as the pole had broken off leaving them free to run away up the road. Some of the boys who had been sleeping on the canvas got shook up but were all right. The two old ladies who lived in the house was in the back eating

breakfast. They heard the noise and found a wagon almost in their living room with a lot of tough, rude looking men swearing around. They were shocked, of course.

By using the side show wagon we got it all on the lot. Dick took charge and had Red and me take the prop wagon and go to the car to get out the blacksmith tools. He worked right along with me and we put a pole into the wagon. I imagine that Chapman had an awful time squaring the beefs of those old ladies. We had two good houses, but it probably took it all to satisfy them ladies as they had a lawyer retained almost at once.

There was a big rhubarb going on at Keewatin, the next town. It was only three miles west and the big argument was—why load the train and move it overland. We had just as long hauls as that for cripes sake. Some towner wised us up when he said there wasn't any road connecting the two places. So that ended

When we were tearing down a light cold rain set in, and by the time we got loaded nearly everyone was in a foul mood. When the boys were dropping the center poles, one got away from them and went down sideways, nearly hitting Scratchy. He told me that it had brushed the arm of his overcoat and he thought that they were trying to kill him as they were too experienced to let a pole get away from them. It was odd because I had seen them when they were in a playful mood stick a stake in the ground and drop a pole on it fair and square, driving the stake into the ground. They were that good.

Before we got loaded the train that was to take us on was there and ready to roll. In cases like that the train crew was always burned up at the delay. I was the last one into the car and the engine had hooked on and started to pull us off the siding. Pony Red was arguing with Tiger

Jack, something about Ireland not being one as yet and would never be until the last Tommie took his dirty feet off of Irish soil. All I said was, "for cripes sake, hire a hall or somethin'." I should have known better. Red rushed me, came at me flailing wild blows before he even reached me. I grabbed him by the left arm and heaved and he went sailing out of the door into the dark. I jumped out and it was so dark I couldn't see a thing. I was calling out, "where are you Pony." All at once I saw stars, sky rockets, flashes of light, and didn't know any more until I came to laying on the ground. It took me some time to figure out what happened. He had hit me and swung back aboard, leaving me

I got straightened out and reckoned which way was west and started out toward Keewatin. It was only three miles. I was so burned up that my reasoning was way off. I should have waited until dawn. It was so dark that I had to feel my way along the ties. I was so busy with thoughts of revenge, I could just envision myself come up to the car, climbing in, jerking him out of his nest and working

him over, Kentucky style.

But it dawned on me that here I was in a wilderness that might be full of wild animals. And too, I was afraid of rattle snakes. They sometimes come out on a road for warmth and I sure didn't want to step on one. Being a smoker I had matches with me. Coming to a trestle, I struck matches to see my way across it. I heard something coming along from the opposite direction. Gawd, I was scared. I started to light matches, holding them up and saying, "hello there, it's a fine morning" and silly things like that. A voice came out of the dark, "Sweet Mither of Jesus, is that you Taddie?" It was Pony; he had came back for me. I thought, the dirty Irish, son of a gun had come back to continue the fight and all at once I was brave once again and wanted nothing more than to tangle with him. But he wasn't on the war path. He had came back to see if I was all right. When I thought of what it must have cost him, a superstitious old country Irishman, to set off in a dark in wild country, all the fight went out of me and we talked and laughed all the way to the train. He and I were good friends for many years afterward and a true pal he always was.

Keewatin was a pleasant little town and we done fair business there. During the night we left the spruce jungles of Ontario behind and woke up out on the prairie at Whitemouth, Manitoba. I awoke in my bunk and right off I sensed that something was different. There was bars of sunshine coming in through the cracks on the side of the car and the air was warm. I couldn't believe it. I hustled outside and we were in a different world to what we had gone to sleep in. The cars was on a siding in a little old western town. All around was the open prairie. There were birds flying about and wild roses in bloom and above all was old Sol beaming away. I sat on a pile of ties near the cookhouse and could smell the coffee and the hot cakes. Clark Bond, who was always an early riser, came along and wished me a good morning. He wanted to get the first cup of coffee out of the pot.

I could hear him and Jimmy and Gracie talking inside the car. The sounds of their voices came out melodious on the warm air. Jimmy and Grace were Kentucky

blacks and real good people.



Marion Clarke came along and she said, "isn't this glorious, Todd?" I said that it sure was, and she said, " maybe we can live for a little while now.

Years later, I dreamed all of this once again one night in northern Maine in the midsts of a bad winter. When I awoke I wanted to crawl right back into that

The night we got loaded in Keewatin, one "White Nite" was setting near the door drinking a bottle of Black Horse Ale. Some one said that is the last bottle you will have of that for a while. At the time the Black Horse Brewery didn't ship its wares west of Ontario. He sat there fondling the empty bottle and the label came off. He slapped it on the side of the car and it stuck. Right off, this brought on a big discussion. Some thought it would stick, others thought that it would not. As time went by, the lads got real foolish about that label. In the mornings they gave it a pat as they left the car and late at nights when they crawled back in they would look and see if it was still there. It got to be kind of a symbol or something, like if our flag was still there.

Business was light in Whitemouth on

June 26. The troupers had a legitimate gripe with D. C. Hawn over a late arrival the next day. Whitemouth was on the mainline of the Canadian Pacific east of Winnipeg. The next spot was on a branch line north of the Peg and it was a Saturday town. It wouldn't had been so bad if it would have been a Monday's.

We got into the yards in Winnipeg about 10 a.m. Saturday morning, and had to be shifted about through the yards and was put on the rear of a local passenger train for the run up to Selkirk. This seemed to all of us a poor job of traffic management. We ate dinner on the way in and never was spotted until about 1:30 p. m. Of course it was a mad rush to get set up and there was people waiting on the lot. I was working just as fast as I could.

Elmer came along and swore at me, saying, "gol dang ye, ye want your money on pay day, but you aren't willing to work for it." I told him, "I will see you tomorrow, you damned Yankee," and kept right on working. For some reason the rubes turned out in Selkirk and we had a full house that afternoon.

In between shows I went into the town on some errand. I was going past a place that had a sign out saying it was a beauty and massage parlour. A little woman came running out of the joint and asked, "I say, are you one the men from the traveling circus?" I told her that I was guilty. She said, "We have one of your chaps in there and I am afraid that he is quite knocked up. Could you possibly come in and see to him?" I went in and there sat Joe Robinson in the chair, with another girl massaging his neck. He came to and was he ashamed. He said that was the first time in his life that he had ever fainted. He blamed it on the medicine he had been taking for his malaria. He paid the girls and hustled off. Them two were cute little Limeys and I stayed and talked to them for a bit. They told me that they had come out here from England in a spirit of adventure and opened up the shop in what they thought was a howling wilderness. I told them to come out to the lot in the evening and that they could be my guests. They agreed.

I laughed all the way back to the show thinking about tough ole Joe "being knocked up." I understood the expression as the English used it, yet it was funny and I couldn't keep it to myself. The guys got to ribbing Joe, asking when it was his time, what was he going to name it and things like that. Joe didn't appreciate all this and was mad at me, and I

couldn't blame him at all.

As we were not due out of town until Sunday evening the pad room was left up. The big top was lowered down, but as

it needed repairs was left flat on the ground to be worked on the next day. The side show top also needed repairs.

The two girls showed up. I could have sneaked them in under the side wall, but figured that they were too nice for that. I put them through the kid show, everything but the cooch. I thought that they wouldn't be interested in it. This proves how ignorant of women I was at that time. I took them through the front door of the big show. Elmer was selling tickets

and Dick was taking them, and they both scowled at me. After we got inside one of the girls asked me who was them rude bounders? I told them that they were the Cooper brothers. She said, "you mean the owners of this establishment; they could stand to take some lessons in good manners." Toronto Bob was selling the reserve seat tickets and Charlotte Jones was taking them. Both of them gave me the old dog eye. After I got the girls seated I went off and found Peggy Ward and got two after show tickets for the girls and went on about my busi-

After the show the girls looked me up and thanked me. They said they were going on a holiday the next day, going down the Red River where some red Indians were camping. They were going to take along a

picnic lunch and a camera and it would just be perfectly marvelous if two strong men would go along to row the boat and did I have a chum?

I thought about the guys with it. Sunday was Pony Red's drunk day. Wagon Wheels came from back east and talked like he had hot mush in his mouth. Little Red was weak on conversation and besides had a trick eye. He had hard blue eyes. At times the left one would turn dead on him. It threw people into a panic to have that one hard eye looking at them and the other one looking like a dead fish's eye. I talked to Robert Anderson and while he didn't think too highly of Limeys, the picnic sounded good to him.

We had a nice time that Sunday, but I had a nagging feeling that I should have been on the lot patching canvas. It was dark by the time we got back and the train was loaded. I ran smack bang into Elmer who was in a good mood, asking me to come into the office. He went over my account and he had everything down about the girls and it had made quite a hole in my B. R.

Monday's town was Gladstone, a 128 mile run. We changed off the Canadian Pacific at Winnipeg on to the Canadian National. This always took time and we were late getting in to Gladstone. Biz was light there, but the weather was hot and

bright and there was no mud. It was all too good to be true to us, all this sunshine and dry lots. But we ran into a another problem, and that was good drinking water. There was a shortage of working boys. We only had one Indian left out of the crowd that joined in Grimsby, one Little Chief. Guys had come and gone since then. It was just too hard of a life I suppose.

Capt. Irwin had a dog and pony groom, who I can hardly recollect. He got into



Barney and Jimmy Aronsen clowns on Cooper Bros. in 1936. Pfening Archives.

some kind of a mood and blew. Hot Cakes had got into trouble with Curly and had refused to get out of his bunk when we got into Gladstone shortly after noon. Curly had been one man short anyhow. He would hire someone in each town and maybe the man would work just one day. I was told to go props. Curly and I got the pad room set up. He stayed on the lot and I was loading trunks on the wagon by myself. It was about 1:30 p. m. and a hot sun was beating down on the roof of the car and still Hot Cakes laid up in a bunk under the roof. I tried to con him down out of there, but to no avail. Billy Grant came along and he poured on the Irish blarney. When this failed he lost his dirty Irish temper and told Cakes that he was done and to get the hell off the show. What Cakes said in reply is too filthy to put into writing.

I thought that was the last of Hot Cakes Slim, that not even he would have the cheek to trail the show after all that. But he did.

We got through the matinee all right and I took it on myself to look for help. I went down to the hobo jungle and found one fellow who was willing to chance it, or as he pronounced it, "chawnce it." He was a little Cockney and I couldn't hardly understand what he said.

Seeing the weather was behaving itself, the people had to start acting up. The performers were just about as good a bunch as you could find, but they were human after all. There was a lot of bickering going on amongst them, little petty things that didn't amount to a hill of beans. Billy Grant had his hands full keeping them in line. This little gray eyed Irishman had lots of nerve and he needed it. One day

just before doors, Texas Joe and Lee Barth got into it. Joe told Lee that he would slit his throat. Billy walked in between them and told them to settle down, that no one was going to cut anyone's throat. Just then some one shouted "doors" and that broke it up.

Hot Cakes was trailing the show and the cook was feeding him. His vacation was short enough. Capt. Irwin took him on as his dog and pony groom. Capt. explained to me that he knew Cakes wasn't much but at least he wasn't a rube. And Cakes told me that this was the job he had wanted ever since he had joined out. Capt. had a January act with a mule and Hot Cakes had to don clown make up for that and work in the wild west show in an unridable mule act. He had found his niche.

One fellow who didn't cause any stir with it was the clown Parento. I think that he was out of that Parento family of Tidoute, Pennsylvania. Tidoute is just sixteen miles down the river from Warren. I figured by his looks that perhaps his real name would have been Swanson or Johnson or something like that. As far as I know he didn't have a first name or a nickname, just Parento and that was the name on his trunk.

I was in Tidoute in 1976 with a pit show for the annual Fireman's Festival and I asked around among the old timers about the name and none seemed to know anything, so it must have been a stage name.

Gilbert Plains, Roblin and Kamsack, Saskatchewan, wasn't much, but on Friday of that week in Preeceville, Saskatchewan, there was a big celebration. It was either Queen Victoria's birthday or Dominion Day or something.

This wingding was held in a natural amphitheater down between two rolls of the prairie. They had skinned the sod off, making a race track and we set up inside of the oval. I can recall Wagon Wheel Bob setting up above the lot with a bloody bandage around his head and Elmer coming up and saying what the hell did he think he was about, to get with it or get to hell off the show. I thought this was wicked and heartless of Elmer as Bob had got hurt in his employ.

The night before in Kamsack, Bob and Chief were tossing the wagon wheels into the car and one rebounded back and landed on Bob's head. I was setting up in a cafe drinking coffee when Robert Anderson came in with Bob. He had a first aid kit amongst his luggage. Bob's blood was dripping all over the Chinaman's floor. He objected to this and wanted Bob to get the hell out. Anderson hit him and took Bob back into the kitchen to run water over his head and patch him up. The Chinaman went to get a Mountie. But the Mountie agreed with Anderson and chastised the Chink for his inhumanity. Thereafter Bob was known as Wagon Wheel.

When Anderson found out about Elmer ordering Bob back to work he ripped old Elmer to his face, fore and aft. Of course he was fired. He came and told me that he would keep in touch and I just couldn't figure out how, but I found out later on.

Those people out on the plains didn't have much chance to whoop it up but when they did they sure did know how to have a good time. That day in Preeceville they whooped it up. They had about everything going they could think of, a rodeo, baseball games, band competitions, beauty contests, the homeliest man contest and a dance that lasted till daylight. Watching over all of this were two red coated Mounties, but they kept a low profile and didn't bother anyone. The show girls went ga-ga over the handsome chaps in their scarlet tunics. Pony Red looked at them with pure hate and said the colors were "Britain's Cruel Red" and made sarcastic remarks about "the thin red line." I suppose if I would have been raised in Ireland in the turbulent times they had over there in the teens that I would have felt the same. I always kind of admired them Mounties as a police force myself. They were a lot better than the local lawmen and railroad bulls were in the states.

Bad news always travels fast and it did that day. The low unmentionable son of a gun who had the liquor Licence and Premises would not serve troupers. The small supplies that the cook and Blondie had soon dried up.

There was a lady there who was the musical director of an all-girl band. Ole Frank Meister, the band leader, went nuts about her, inviting her band to play during the matinee and insisting on her leading the combined bands. I reckoned it was just professional courtesy but others thought that he just wanted to romance her.

They had chariot races. The chariots were just the front running gears of wagons with the driver standing up on the bolsters with four head of them little tough mustangs. The pad room was set up real close to the so-called track. When

this race started with a bang, every one was screeching and whooping and the racket was terrible.

Our horses and ponies went insane, screaming and rearing and plunging. They tore the tent down around themselves. We had to crawl in there to quiet them and push the tent back up. The only quiet member of that bunch was Diamond the mule. There were no injuries. We loaded up by moonlight and was hauled into Kelvington.

Newspaper ad used by Cooper Bros. Circus in 1936. Pfening Archives.

This spot was on the end of a branch line. The local freight set us on a siding there until early Monday morning. It was a pleasant place with lots of trees and a lake. The lot was on the lake and it was a short haul from the siding. The local law, who also had a dray business, told me that the winter before it had been sixty below for six

straight weeks. I shuddered over that thought. This man had been a boxer at one time and Tiger Jack challenged him to a bout. It was under the big top that night after the show was over. The lawman won an easy decision over our Jack. They wouldn't allow the working boys inside during the fight. They were afraid we might start a revolution or something.

Everything was loaded except the pad room and the trunks. The people wanted to take advantage of the lake to bathe in and to do their washing. As I felt there was a line dividing the artists and the working help more keenly than a lot of the boys did, I hiked back in the country a ways and found a stream and took a bath and washed my clothes. I felt that the kinkers had a right to their privacy and to their own thoughts. After my clothes had dried I started back. I came up on to a sod house and stopped to get a drink of water. The people got to talking to me and invited me to have a late dinner with them. The boy and girl of the family had seen the show and had seen me on the lot and started to ask all kinds of questions, as per usual. I was loyal to the show and

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didn't reveal anything that might hurt it. They were a real nice family. I left and hiked back to the lot.

I laid down on the straw among the horses and went to sleep. When I woke up it was dark and I was hungry and decided to go up to the only cafe in the place and get a late supper. Hot Cakes was setting in among the ponies and asked me where was I going. I told him. He said he was up there before, and that it was a Chink joint with good looking white hashers. He said he would go back up and get another feed. I wasn't too happy about this, as that boy was unpredictable. You never knew what he might do. But I didn't want to hurt his feelings. We sat down to a table and the waitress was good looking. I ordered a feed and Hot Cakes ordered a huge dinner. I wondered if he had rolled a drunk or found a pocket book or what. There he sat. with uncombed hair,

dirty face and hands, and dirty cloths, reeking of body odor, horse, dog and pony, and he was trying to make a good impression on the girl. Now this nut usually talked like one of those, "dose and dem" lads. But when he wanted to he could speak the King's English. She served me first and I started to eat in a rush as I could see trouble coming up. Sure enough Hot Cakes says, "Oh by the way my dear lady, perhaps you can help me out a bit. I am one of those that is accursed with a faulty memory. I was here at lunch time and I had a nice luncheon and for the world I can't recall whether I paid or not, honesty is the best policy, what?" I thought, oh Christ.

I paid the girl right then to get it out of the way in case I wanted to leave in hurry. The girl said that she wasn't on duty that early. She went back into the kitchen and was talking to the Chinaman. He got real excited and was pointing at Cakes and jabbering away. The girl came back and said that Cakes had left without paying and he wanted to pay for both meals now. Hot Cakes did a quick change with a "what are you talkin' about, you stupid

hoser broad, I never was in this dump before and that Chink is a damn liar." I left and didn't hear the rest of it.

The Chink must of sicked the town bull on to him, as he came on to the lot and shook Cakes out of his nest. He went into his speech impediment act. But it didn't work, all the bull wanted was the \$1.05 that he owed the Chinaman. Hot Cakes pulled out his pants pockets to show that they were empty and asked, "tho wut?" The bull said, "I will have to put you in jail, that's 'tho wut.' Jumping a board bill or restaurant bill is a serious crime in Canada." I paid the bull the money rather than to see Cakes arrested and that was that.

I reckoned that should have taught that boy a lesson, but it did not. The next day in Sturgis he got raving drunk on wine and Billy Grant wouldn't let him into the house. Billy told me to do something with him. I tried laying him out in the shade, but he would get up and stagger toward the performers entrance yelling what a good trouper he was. I heard some one holler "doors" and I stuffed him into a dog cage in the pad room and latched the door on him. I left him raving away and hurried inside. As soon as I got a break I went out to see how he was and he had vomited and passed out. There he laid all filthy and with flies swarming around him. The dog cage was spotted up against the canvas partition of the ladies dressing room and they were up in arms over the stench. I dragged him out back and left him in the shade and rinsed out the dog cage and hurried back in. By supper time he was able to toddle off to the kitchen to eat his beans.

Bennie, the drummer in the band was writing a song about things that occurred on the show to the tune of *Hinkey*, *Dinky*, *Parley Vouz*.

He dedicated one verse to Hot Cakes latest escapade. It went something like this:

"It was in Sturgis that Hot Cakes got drunk.

"Oh, Hinkey Dinkey, Parley Vouz.

"Yes, twas in Sturgis that Hot Cakes got drunk.

"And Slim locked him up in the property wagon.

"Oh, Hinkey, Dinkey, Parley Vouz."

Bennie got into trouble over writing songs about some of the ladies. One caused Peggy Ward to loose her temper:

"Peggy is fickle.

"She has a shape just like a pickle.

"She sells tickets to the wild west show.

"That's the reason no one likes to go."

Business was off in those prairie towns and people were starting to gripe, especially the grifters. I could never understand these people, then or now. They wanted a big score every day. If they had an off day they screamed something terrible. After I came home from the Army I found that many of the shows still carried grift and I gave them a wide berth. They sickened me. Most of the old timers were either dead or retired. Some of them old fellows were gentlemen at all times even when they were clipping suckers. But this new breed was different. The vice showed on their faces. They were not above using strong arm methods. I think that the way they worked hurried the demise of grift on shows.

A few years past I was working in a big meat market. There were men there robbing the company blind, not just the company but customers as well. The business folded throwing about sixty

people out of work.

I recalled Whitey Chapman telling me about when he was the fixer for old J. A. Jones. J. Augustus would tell him to take out enough to pay for his midnight lunch and Whitey told him no, if I do that I'll be taking out enough for a pair of shoes, then an over coat, then a suit of clothes and then the show will go broke and I will be out in the cold.

A few seasons later I was on the front door of a rep-tenter and the lady manager told me to keep out enough for a meal and I was tempted, but I recalled what Whitey had told me and didn't do it. "If every one gets to stealing off a show it will soon fold."

Montie Montana and all the hands at Double M Co., send Seasons Greetings to Circus Fans everywhere, with this

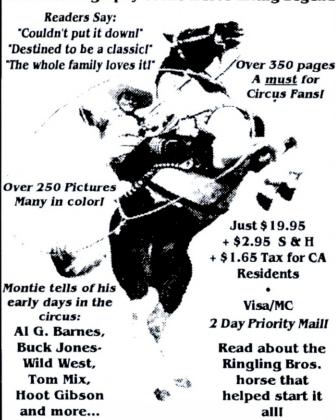
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Season's Greetings



EASTERN STATES EXPOSITION



Which Proudly Presented
Circus World Museum's Traveling Exhibit
"200 Years of the American Circus"
Wayne McCary, President

ne hundred years ago a beautiful new wagon circus opened. It was not owned by an experienced showman, but by a young man from a wealthy family who had wanted a circus from childhood.

Albert M. Wetter was born in Massillon, Ohio on November 27, 1871. His father, Jacob, was a successful Massillon business man who had accumulated considerable net worth. The elder Wetter, Swiss born, was one of Massillon's self-made men, who

had retired from a successful merchant's career to enter the coal, stone and banking businesses.

Albert was an only child who had everything a child could desire. Standing only five feet four inches high, he was a fastidious dresser and always looked like he had just stepped out of a band box. As a child his pets included birds, dogs, ponies and other animals which were kept in a large barn at the rear of the Wetter property. Young Wetter had was impressed by the success of his friend John G. Robinson, and encouraged by his wealthy friends he made the plunge into the circus business.

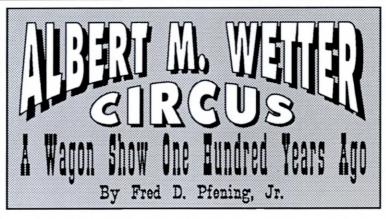
At age 21 Albert inherited \$20,000. With cash in hand he at once began making plans to fulfill his childhood dream of owning and operating a circus.

His father tried to discourage him by offering a \$10,000 bonus if he would abandon the idea. Albert refused the offer and plunged ahead with his plans to open a circus in the spring of 1893.

America was not economically strong in 1892. There were strikes and riots with financial panic sweeping the country. Conditions had not improved in the spring of 1893, but this did not deter young Albert in planning his circus.

Wetter had a false start when he formed a partnership with a man who had found the gullable, star-eyed dreamer. The March 31, 1893 Massillon Evening Independent reported: "Albert M. Wetter has dissolved his partnership heretofore existing between the firm of Gibson and Wetter and will start out with his own show, under his name, and with himself as sole owner. One car of properties arrived this morning, and no time will be lost in organizing the venture for a long tour. The show will open in Massillon.

"Mr. Gibson was accompanied this morning by James Anderson, Jr. It seems that Mr. Gibson had been misrepresented, and his experience in the circus business is not worthy of mention. Mr. Wetter, when questioned as to why they dis-



solved the partnership, simply stated that when people took him for a greenhorn they were badly mistaken.

"I have left Gibson,' he said, 'but I do not mean to quit the circus business by any means. In the early part of May I expect to start out with a complete circus and Albert M. Wetter will be the sole owner and proprietor. Mr. James Anderson, Jr., a son of Adam Forepaugh's noted manager, and who is thoroughly posted in the business, will be my assistant manager. The show will be trans-

ported by sixteen wagons which, with 40 sets of harness, have been ordered and will arrive in this city within a week.'

Albert M. Wetter as pictured in his show's 1893 herald. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

"The outfit includes a main tent-140 x 68 feet; two horse tents 20 x 40, a side show canvas 30 x 60 and eight cages of animals, of which four cages are here now and one bear and a pair of lions will arrive next week. A dozen laborers are now at work at our winter quarters making all the necessary preparations for the road.

"I intend to carry forty head of horses and I want to buy twenty head in Massillon at once. The colors decided upon for the circus paraphernalia are chocolate and white, and our season will open with a two day engagement in Massillon."

On April 15 the Evening Independent reported: "When Albert M. Wetter's show departs from winter quarters in the merry month of May, the reminiscent Dr. George P. Knott will be some two weeks in advance up to all his old tricks, making contracts, and spreading abroad in the

land the name of Wetter and the virtues of the Model Moral Shows. Dr. Knott has been in the 'advance' business for a quarter of a century."

The story then proceeded to tell of Knott's starting in 1853 with Spaulding & Rogers and continuing with John Robinson, Van Amburgh, Dan Rice, Thayer & Noyes, G. G. Grady, Dan Castello, Hemmings, Cooper & Whitney, Cooper & Bailey and finally Barnum & Bailey. He finished saying: "But I sup-

pose you are better acquainted with the shows of today than I am, although I still take the *Clipper*."

The April 29 Evening Independent stated: "Fifteen members of the executive staff of Albert M. Wetter's New Model Moral Shows are now on the spot, moving heaven and earth under the general supervision of the proprietor, getting things together for the grand opening in Massillon, May 15 and 16. Tons of blue paint are being exhausted, acres of white

canvas are being set up, and the winter quarters are prevaded with an air that vibrates with vim, vigor and victory.

'The printing presses of the INDEPENDENT'S establishment are grinding night and night, and out of their mews fell tens of thousands of tickets for the big show, museum and concert, contracts for billboards, ho-

tels, forage, help, performers—there being over twenty contract forms alone.

"Dr. Knott, the advance genius, is to take the road on Tuesday. His wagon arrived today from the manufacturer. It is glorious in white and gold—the circus colors, twice the size of the largest vans, and will be

drawn by four horses. It has compartments for cans, paper, bills, and seats for five bill posters.

"Dr. Knott will have eight people in advance, divided into two brigades, which will travel one and two weeks ahead of the show.

"Already proprietor Wetter can count 38 horses--all white or gray, as his own, and he will have 60 before he goes out on the road. It will take 75 to 100 people to run the aggregation.

'The band has been secured. It will be include twelve pieces under the direction of Burr Robbins' old leader, a veteran

who fairly breathes out circus music.

'The rolling stock includes eight baggage wagons not yet here, six cages coming in a few days from Cleveland, a band chariot now here and in the hands of the decorators, an elaborate ticket wagon, and three passenger wagons, something like omnibuses, for the transportation of performers. The harness will be black leather with red patent leather trimmings, and silver initials on the horses' blinds.

'The main show tent will be 190 feet long when erected. There will also be a menagerie tent 80 feet deep, a side show tent 100 feet long, cook tents, blacksmith shop, chandelier tent, and horse tents.

"Part of Mr. Wetter's paper arrived today and the first sample now hangs in one of the INDEPENDENT"S windows."

A herald issued by the Wetter show stated: "The Barnum of all 25 cent shows.

"128 Head of Horses, 105 men, 5 clowns, over 40 Performers, 2 Rings and

Stage, Hippodrome Races.

"Our promise a sacred pledge. We positively exhibit everything advertised. We invite comparison and criticism. Gymnasts extraordinary, aerialists defying, more canvas, more horses, more men, more acts, more performers, and more capital invested than any three 25 cent shows on the American continent, an honest show, organized to exhibit to honest and discriminating people.

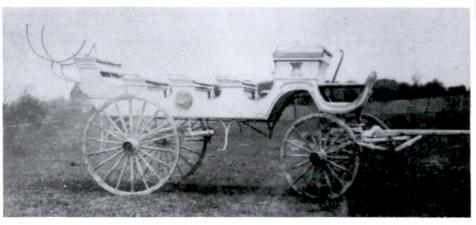
"A Veritable Flood of New Ideas! The culmination of Years of Study. Nature's Reasoning and unlimited Capital.

"A Few Words To The Amusement

Loving People.

"In presenting this large and expensive company of rare and talented Artists, I do so with the full assurance that it will prove more pleasing, amusing and instructive than any other show of like character that has ever visited your city. I have gathered together only the best artists that money could procure and in soliciting your generous patronage,

liciting your generous patronage, ask that you compare our performances with that of any other show in America exhibiting for 25 cents admission. An expression of your opinion regarding our performance, the conduct of our men, and the genial character and makeup of this show, is respectfully asked. All promises made in print are conscientiously fulfilled. Profanity, vulgarity and drunkenness are not tolerated. Positively free of all games of chance, thieves, pickpockets and disreputable characters. Clergymen are welcome at all times, free of charge, and are urged to accept the courtesy extended to them and their families. The canvas is waterproof and the seats are comfortable and safely constructed. In clos-



The bandwagon Wetter acquired from the Dalton, Ohio municipal band. Circus World Museum collection.

ing these remarks I desire to impress on the public mind that all promises made by me are considered a sacred pledge and will be maintained throughout. Thanking the public for their liberal patronage in the past and soliciting their attendance in the future, I remain, The public's faithful and obedient servant. ALBERT M. WETTER.

"Comfortable seating room for 5,000 in our mammoth waterproof pavilion."

If all of this puffery were not enough the show had the nerve to include a drawing of two hippos in the herald.

The performance was to be presented two rings in an 190 foot big top. Other canvas would included a 80 foot menagerie top, a 100 foot side show top, a cookhouse tent, a blacksmith top, a chandelier top and a couple of horse tents.

A parade was planned, the center piece being a band chariot built in 1888 by Mar-

This Wetter ad appeared in the August 17 Lebanon, Ohio *Patriot*. John Polacsek collection.

tin Schultz in nearby Dalton, Ohio for the Dalton municipal band. Wetter had his monogram painted below the drivers seat. The name "Massillon" was painted above the front wheel, and a lion's head was painted on each side.

In a July 31, 1951 letter to George Chindahl, Adam E. Schultz, son of the Schultz company owner, said: "My father started on a small scale with Wetter making only two or three wagons, and one that was rebuilt. Later during the winter of 1892-93 more wagons were built. They were painted by Orton Wilcox at our shop.

The Massillon Evening Independent on May 12 reported: "Everything is progressing favorably toward the grand opening of Mr. Wetter's show

opening of Mr. Wetter's show.

"It is a bigger enterprise than people about here supposed, and the IN-DEPENDENT takes great pleasure in announcing the first program: Executive staff, proprietor and manager, A. M. Wetter; business manager, James Anderson, Jr.; press representative, George P. Knott; amusement director, G. E. Grapewine; musical director, Prof Davidson; stock director, Bert Mille; canvas director, Jack Smith; transportation, E. T. Domer; lighting director, White Davidson.

"Program:

"Grand tournament.

"Display 1 Ring 1, beautiful 12 horse entree; Ring 2, trained ponies.

"Display 2 Ring 1 Kato, the human knot; Ring 2, vaulting, Eddie Stiene.

"Display 3 Stage. Matsumosuke and Myoski, of the Royal Imperial Japanese Troupe in wonderful balancing perchact

"Display 4 Ring 1, Melvin and Hill, the Eiffel Towers of the acrobatic world; Ring 2 Baker Bros., acrobatic hat spinners.

"Display 5 Albert M. Wetter's superb trained ponies.

"Display 6 Ring 1 Fred and Blanche Delvy, sensational double trapeze; Ring 2 O'Hanna, the beautiful Japanese girl, rope walking.

Coming Crowned With Triumph Laurels Justly Merited.

ALBERT M. WETTER'S NEW MODEL SHOWS, CIRCUS,

Menagerie and Roman Hippodrome.

ARTISTS OF HIGH RANK FROM THE FLOWERY KINGDOM.

The only Japanese Circus in America! Pagents of Oriental Spiender!
Remember we have
More Men., More Horses, More Canyas, More Acts, More Performe:

More Men, More Horses, More Canvas, More Acts, More Performers and More Capital Invested, than any three 25 cent shows in America.

5 CLOWNS. 2 RINGS. A Trope of Finely Educated HORSES.
Stage and Hippodrome Races.
O'KABE'S Japanese CIRCUS,

Twelve in number, including Oero, the Phenominal Pemalé Child Wonder, in Her Thrilling Mid-alf Evolutions.

CHALENGE BAND OF SOLO ARTISTS.

Free Japanese Exhibition on the Grounds after the Parada. Grand Hold Glittering Free

Free Japanese Exhibition on the Grounds after the Parade. Grand field dilitering Free Strict Parade at 1320 Noon. Two Performances Daily-Aftersoon and Evening Doors open at I and 7 o'clock p. m. Admission raduced to 15 cents.
WILL EXHIBIT AT LEBANON AUG-18, SCHWARTZ'S OR LOT.

"Display 7 Ring 1 Melvin and Hill, the Chinaman and clown; Ring 2 comic Chinese table act.

"Display 8 Spanish ring act by the com-

pany.

"Display 9 Ring 1Eddie Stiene on the invisible wire; Ring 2 Ero, the Japanese girl in contortion act.

"Display 10 Horsemanship by Prof Snodgrass.

"Display 11 Myoski and O'Ero, Japanese perchacts.

"Display 12 C. E. Grapewine, Mysumosaki and O'Ero, gymnasts; juggling act; human cork screw.

"Display 13 Clown pony.

"Display 14 Myoski, wire and slide for life.

"Display 15 Ground and lofty tumbling. "Display 16 Hippodrome races. Pony, sack, man vs. horse, wheelbarrow, jockey, boys, mixed.

"Concert."

The *Independent* of May 15 reported on the parade: "Proprietor Albert M. Wetter led the parade, seated in an open buggy, pulled by two beautiful white Arabian horses, skillfully guiding them through the crowd that lined the streets.

Following Mr. Wetter was the band in the handsomely decorated band chariot, patriotically named 'Massillon.' Professor Snodgrass and his troupe of trained horses were next in line. The came several handsomely painted animals wagons, their sides showing pictures suggestive of jungle life. Director of horses, Bert Miller, was in charge of a company of gaily costumed jockeys. After a clown mounted on a trick pony came two other well known Massillonians, namely the ponies, Helen and Blazes, groomed to a satin finish, with their manes and tails banged especially for the occasion. The Imperial Japanese troupe was seated in a landau drawn by four horses and last of all was another clown astride trick donkey."

Weather did not favor the opening, with wind and rain causing lots of mud on the lot. This did not keep the locals from coming out en-mass to wish the local boy success. A strong crowd of 1,200 attended the matinee and the night show was packed to the ring curbs. Admission was twenty-five cents, with ten cents extra for the concert.

On May 16 the *Independent* covered the opening: "It was as good a circus as Stark county has ever seen. The Imperial Japanese do astonishing things. Elsie Grapewine does a flying ring turn that is more than marvelous. The trained horses are quite equal to Bartholomew's Paradox, and the clowns rise to the occasion. The lemonade contained lemon juice, the peanuts were genuine and the concert was tip topper [sic]. Nobody minded the mud or the rain, and everybody felt just as they



Herald used by the Wetter show during the 1893 season.

do at a camp meeting--that it was a good thing to be there.

"We took in over \$1,000 yesterday,' said Mr. Wetter today, 'and I suppose we turned over that much away. My home friends have backed me up in a manner I did not dream of, and I shall never forget their kindness."

Forty horses hauled the show eight miles to the second stand at Canton, followed by Navarre and Beach City. The show stayed in Ohio until late August.

Although little was sent to the New York Clipper the home folks were kept posted with regular reports from the show. On May 18 the *Independent* reported: "Hick's 'central storm' period kept thousands of people away from Wetter's circus at Massillon and Canton, but it could not baffle the energetic proprietor of the New Model Moral Shows. Telegrams from other points say that on account of the weather, competing shows did not attempt to pitch their tents, but Mr. Wetter landed his aggregation in Canton, and gave two exhibitions, the audiences being large, considering the rain. The receipts for the day were \$260."

The May 24 Independent told of the show's first misfortune: "At New Philadelphia yesterday morning wind blew down the Wetter show's big canvas tent, and necessitated the abandonment of the afternoon performance. But in the evening the tent was packed and Wetter left town with \$1,700 on the right side of the ledger. He intends to purchase a new auditorium tent and will use the old one as a shelter for his animals.

"Several changes have been made by Mr. Wetter in his executive staff. Advance agent Dr. Knott and manager Jimmie Anderson have been released, a man named Graham taking the doctor's place, and Ellsworth Grapewine that of Anderson. One or two other minor changes have been made, and the boss canvasman, who committed a brutal assault on another employee on the opening night in Massillon, has been discharged."

The show was plagued by rain during the season and the muddy roads forced it to use as many as sixteen horses to move the heaviest wagons on the roads into Cadiz, where it was late in arriving.

The Akron Beacon Republican published this after notice on June 23: "A good circus performance. A circus of any kind is generally sure to be liberally patronized, and the showing on West Thornton Street is no exception to the rule. The Albert M. Wetter show as it is called, is neither better or worse than the ordinary small show, which travels across the country in wagons. The combination boasts of two rings, but as performances are going on in one ring the greater part of the time, the necessity of two rings is not apparent. The redeeming features of the show are the tumbling and the performances of the Japanese, the later being exceptionally good."

The Independent reported on June 29: "The new tent a 200 x 100 will be put into use in Cleveland, Fourth of July week. The show is greatly improved since we left Massillon. We had only 40 horses when we went out of town. Now we have 60, We have added bears, monkeys and tiger cats to the menagerie. We have a tiptop side show with a fat man, snake charmer, trained monkeys and birds for attractions. Wetter said: The privileges I

run myself. Our lemonade receipts run about \$30 on warm days.

"Mr. Plunkard, the new treasurer, is a first class man. A good many changes have been made in the personnel of the staff, and I am surrounded by men in whom I have the utmost confidence.

"I have plans for next year. I shall put a railroad show on the road, and will invest forty or fifty thousand dollars in it."

The July 8 New York Clipper published this roster of the Wetter show: "Albert H. Welter, sole proprietor and manager; A. J. Plunkard, treasurer; a Japanese troupe (five in number); the Okabe Family; Guthrie and Piesley; Hill and Melvin; Baker Bros.; Claude Le Verne and wife; Sheridan; Meters; Cyclone; Ferguson; Delvy and wife; Leonard Schwann; D. A. McDonald's independant band of sixteen pieces; Prof. Snodgrass; Edward Mausz; Charles Manlin; A. H. Graham, general advance agent, with twenty-two assistants; J. S. Scott, boss hostler, with twenty assistants; and Robert Piesley, equestrian director."

Wetter reported two packed houses at Berea on July 4. With Whitney's circus as opposition they played to 4,000, according to the *Independent*.

In Bellevue a black bear broke out of his cage during the parade. The march was stopped and the jockey riders took after the escaped animal and captured it under a house. After reaching the show grounds and opening the cage they found the bear dead.

The route was seldom published in the *Clipper*, but a number of stands were listed in the July 29 *Independent*. The towns illustrated the average jumps made each day: July 31, Wapakoneta, 15 miles; Sidney, August 1, 40 miles; August 2, Piqua, 10 miles; August 3, Troy, 8 miles; August 4, St. Paris, 14 miles and August 5, Urbana, 13 miles. The show stayed in Ohio until late August.

The August 26 Independent reported the Wetter show was in Newport, Kentucky on that day. The September 30 Independent stated: 'The last week of the Wetter show was in coal country, showing from Jackson to Shawnee [Ohio]. The week has been a very successful one and the A. M. Wetter's Model Moral has scored a pronounced hit. Treasurer A. J. Plunkard left for his home last Thursday having accepted a winter's engagement."

The September 2 Clipper contained these notes: "The last two weeks have been among the best, crowded night houses being the rule at every stand. While the matinees have averaged large. At Lebanon [Ohio], the former home of our manager, A. J. Graham, the canvas was packed at both performances, while all the performers and band put forth



A highly decorated 1894 Wetter baggage wagon.

their best efforts to please the people. Charley Hill was the recipient of a watch, chain and charm as a birthday present. Billy Lee was presented with a silk umbrella at Lebanon. While at Lockland a gentleman living near the lot lost his life while digging in a well, leaving his family in destitute circumstances. Mr. Wetter turned the proceeds of the evening concert over to the widow. A contract for seven new cages, one large band chariot and some small wagons has been given out. A number of additions have been made to

our band until it now numbers sixteen pieces. The new faces in the dressing room are Dan Malcolm and wife; Ed Harmon and wife; Johnny Griffin; Sig Minola; Frank Ceviljo and Ed Howett. Mr. Wetter has been absent for several days in consultation with an architect and master mechanic in making some alterations in drawings for our train for next season. The sleeping and dining cars will present many new ideas."

The November 4 Clipper told of the show's closing: "On October 14 the band

Cage wagon No. 20 was typical of those on the 1894 Wetter show.



played Auld Lang Syne and Home Sweet Home, the curtain rolled down, and the season became a thing the past. The closing performances were to have taken place under canvas at Massillon, Mr. Wetter's home, on October 12 and 13. Two performances were given on the 12th to packed canvas. It commenced raining 1:30 in the afternoon opening and continued throughout the day and night. At seven o'clock the rain was coming down in torrents, and a high wind at the same time induced Mr. Wetter to abandon the night show and it was a lucky decision on his part, as he had a blow down about nine o'clock. A free exhibition had been announced for afternoon of the 14th for the benefit of the public school children, and the tickets had already been distributed. Rather than disappoint the children the Opera House was secured and a performance was given to the most densely packed audience ever assembled in Massillon, the performers and band giving their services gratuitously on this occasion. During the season the show traveled 276 miles, missed one stand, and not a blow down until we reached home, not a horse lost and not a sick horse during the season. The seventy-eight head of stock closed in excellent condition.

"At the close of the performance Mr. Wetter presented Oero, the female Jap wonder, with a gold watch and chain. She also received a handsome emerald ring from our manager Mr. Graham. The season has been successful beyond the expectations of Mr. Wetter, and he and his assistants will devote their entire time to devising novel features for the coming season.

"The show will go out more than double its present size with everything first class. All wagons will be painted white and gilt. The menagerie will consist of twelve small cages and two open dens,

The 1894 Wetter big top canvas wagon had paintings of George Washington crossing the Delaware.



This parade tableau wagon pictured Wetter on its sides.

one elephant and three camels. The big top used this season will be used for menagerie and trained stock, the present sixty foot menagerie top will next season be used for the dressing room. A new main canvas is now completed and stored in the Thompson and Vanderveer loft in Cincinnati. Equestrian acts, both male and female, and a high grade hippodrome will be added.

'The parade will be made very attractive, all trappings being new, and two first class bands. Band No. 1 will be conduced by Prof. Leo Steppan and will be featured. They will be known as Wetter's White Hussar Band. The Japanese troupe, twelve in number, will be a distinct feature, and coming direct from Japan, their wardrobe and acts will be all men."

The December 2 Clipper provided this report on the Albert M. Wetter's Great American, German and Japanese Allied Shows: "The show has been safely stowed away in its new and commodious winter quarters, leased for a term of four years in the heart of the city of Massillon, Ohio.

The winter quarters consists of an elegant stone barn, with stabling room for one hundred and forty head of horses, shed room for fifty wagons, room for one hundred tons of hay and a ring barn with

a thirty-two foot ring. Mr. Wetter has been out to the World's Fair and has bought quite an extensive menagerie, as well as engaged some of the leading features of the World's Fair. Next season the show will be a one hundred and twenty horse show. The big top will be a one hundred, with two fifties. The menagerie will be an eighty, with two forties. It will be one of the finest and best wagon shows ever put on the road. Four wagons, eleven head of stock and fifteen men will be ahead of the show."

The show made 135 stands during the tour and appears to have had a winning season, quite an accomplishment for a novice twenty-one year old. It is clear that Wetter had business acumen and had found competent bosses to get it up and down. The young man may have become over confident, reveling in success.

1894

Wetter appears to have felt he was "the second coming of Barnum" and was right up there with the big boys of the circus world. He attended a convention of circus managers in Cincinnati, Ohio from January 14 to 17, 1894. An advance report in the December 23 Clipper said that white tops heavy weights like B. E. Wallace,

A cage in the Albert M. Wetter 1894 menagerie.









Two wagons at the Schultz factory in Dalton. Ohio.

Walter L. Main, John F. Robinson, Al M. Wheeler, J. H. LaPearl, Leon Washburn, Sig Sautelle, W. B. Reynolds, Bob Hunting, Burr Robbins and Martin Downs planned to attend.

The January 1, 1894 Clipper covered the Cincinnati proceedings: 'The convention of circus managers, which assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio January 15, remained in session for three days, and wound up in a blaze of glory January 17. The Queen City was full of circus people, who had gathered from far and near, to be present and take part in the proceedings of the most unique assemblage that had ever come together. There were showmen and agents to attend the convention, performers and attaches who were after situations, and show printers and canvas makers in search of orders, and a merry lot of people they were. It was hard work for them to get down to business, but finally, at 2 P. M. the convention was called together in the parlors of the Hotel Emory. Peter Sells was made temporary chairman, and John Robinson temporary secretary. From then on until the adjournment the proceedings and deliberations of the most remarkable convention of modern times progressed without hitch or flaw. A preamble and resolutions, together with a constitution and by laws, were drawn up, committees were appointed, grievances were discussed, remedies suggested and officers elected, all in the most expeditious and business like manner im-

"The association is called The Protective League of American Showmen, and is designed to correct the many impositions which showmen encounter, chiefly excessive licenses, suits in attachment and contract breaking employees. Membership is open to managers of tent shows,

agents of tent shows, circus printers, tent makers, city billposters and all other people whose interests are largely identified with those of circus managers. The officers of the league are as follow: President, Eph. Sells; first vice president, E. H. Sprague; second vice president, Albert M. Wetter; corresponding secretary, W. H. Donaldson; recording secretart, Ed. Cullins. A board or directors, consisting of the following well known people, was also appointed: Sam H. Joseph, W. E. Franklin, Peter Sells, Nick Roberts and John Lowlow."

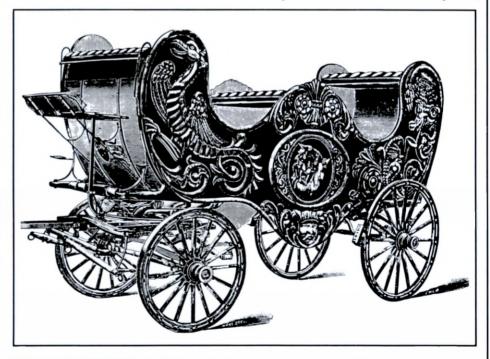
While attending the Cincinnati meeting Wetter engaged a number of well known circus personalities such as Charles W. Fish, the bareback rider; William N. Mer-

Wetter paid \$500 for his 1894 band chariot. No photos of the wagon have been found.

One of the Wetter baggage wagons in the menagerie tent.

rick, bandleader and Mark Monroe, menagerie superintendent.

Business conditions worsened in the spring of 1894, but young Wetter was anxious to try it again. The prior season's winnings were burning a hole in his pocket, although he gave up plans to place the show on rails. The January 20, 1894 Clipper reported: "Everything is progressing favorably at the Wetter winter quarters. The wagons are being beautifully striped and decorated with gold. There will be twenty-four wagons in line in the parade next season. New wagons are being built at Toledo, Cincinnati and Dalton, Ohio, while forty sets of harness have been ordered at Columbus. Mr. Wetter has bought the Stowe troupe of trained dogs, six spotted horses, six Shetland ponies,



twelve head of mules and ten head of work horses. The show will start May 15, 16."

Adam Schultz said the Schultz firm built all the new wagons for the expanded 1894 show. On March 1 the Schultz firm received an order for twelve new wagons for Wetter. The most expensive was a band chariot. The order for the wagon was placed on March 15 and was to cost \$500. On April 6 an order was placed for a lion cage to cost \$300. In addition, a pole wagon, a canvas wagon, four cages, a ticket wagon, two chariots and a fancy buggy were built for Wetter. Schultz delivered six wagons on May 10. Schultz noted that the last Wetter work was completed at midnight before the opening day. The wagon photos illustrating this article are of the 1894 show, some of which were taken at the Schultz factory in Dalton.

Wetter placed a large advertisement in the February 17 Clipper wanting male and female riders, with stock; sober and reliable working people. The ad noted that: "Good wages will be paid, not promised. Boosers need not apply. The superior feeding qualities of this show are well known."

The next week's Clipper stated: "The Wetter menagerie will be a strong feature. Twenty cages, two elephants and four camels, besides a novelty, will certainly verify this statement, and our spread of canvas, under the watchful eye George Wormold, the superintendent and his competent assistant George Cuy, will be nothing if not a 'sea of white.' Mark Monroe will superintend the menagerie department. The show will be transported by 160 head of horses and mules. Four wagons and a buggy are required to herald the coming of the 'biggest and best' wagon show the world ever knew, and twenty-six knights of the brush will attend to any opposition."

One of the Wetter passenger wagons used to transport performers.

The Clipper of March 3 reported from Wetter's winter quarters: 'Three new cages and an open den left the shops this week and four more will be completed by the end of the month. Our new tableaux wagon #76 doubtless is the finest wagon ever built for this show. On either side are massive wood carvings representing the coat of arms of the United States, while the four corners present paintings of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Grant.

"Chas. W. Fish is one of the late additions to more than a score of sawdust celebrities who will give a performance second to none in this country when merit is considered. M. B. Raymond, who last season with Ringling Bros., has signed with this show as business manager."

The March 16 *Clipper* reported that W. H. Merrick, who for more than a dozen years had been Sells Bros. musical director, had signed in that position, and the Fisher brothers would be an aerial feature.

On March 25, 1894 General Jacob S. Coxey's Army of the Unemployed marched out of Massillon and headed for the nation's capital to petition for reforms. Coxey was later connected with Wetter.

General agent G. P. Campell left Massillon on April 23. The advance had been enlarged to sixteen billposters. Fourteen horses pulled seven wagons and buggies on the advance.

The May 8, 1894 Independent reported: "A real elephant, more menagerie attractions for the Wetter show. Dispatches from proprietor Wetter addressed to the winter quarters announced a consignment of animals purchased in Chicago is now ready for shipment. Mark Monroe left Monday night for Chicago and is expected to return with his new pets by fast freight sometime Thursday or Friday. The list of purchases includes one elephant, a pair of lions, a pair of kangaroos and one black tiger. There is but one other black tiger in captivity in America. The elephant is an Asiatic about 25 years of age. It was

first exhibited on the Forepaugh show, then was transfered to Barnum's and next to Irwin Bros."

An advertisement in the Massillon newspaper announced the opening 1894 stand of Albert M. Wetter's Great Shows and World Menagerie on May 15 and 16. The ad listed "thirty world-wide celebrated performers headed by Charles W. Fish, the undisputed champion bareback rider; a double troupe of Japanese; five kinds of of music in the parade, including Wetter's great military band under the direction of Professor William Merrick. Admission fifty cents, children under twelve half price."

One report listed these additional acts in the 1894 performance, Billy Burke, clown; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Grapewine, double traps; Frank Miller, a rider who doubled as a free act after the parade walking a rope from the ground to a big top pole; and Al Ryder a knock-about clown. Menagerie boss Mark Monroe worked the single elephant act and a boxing kangaroo. The show was closed with an untamable lion act.

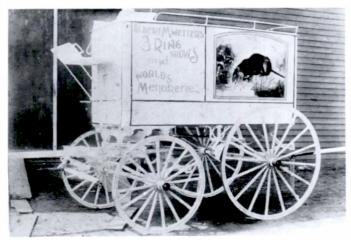
The opening of the Wetter show was covered in the May 26 Clipper: 'The Albert M. Wetter band played at Massillon, Ohio May 15, 16. We gave four performances, at each of which standing room commanded a premium, while our annex kept up a continual grind from early morn til long after 'all over.'

"From the grand tournament till the last race around the hippodrome track the opening performance went as smoothly as though the show had seen several months, and every act in both rings received plaudits of the assembled multitudes. The riding of Chas. W. Fish and Frank H. Miller and wife and the wonderful work of our Japs, received the lion's share of attention.

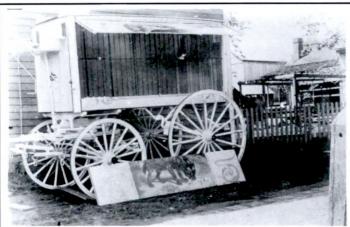
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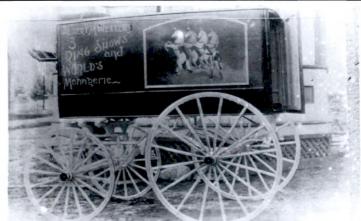
"Prof. Sheidler, in the side show, and

Another passenger wagon used during the 1894 season.









A newly completed cage at the Schultz wagon factory.

the clever work of Dan C. Manning and wife in the concert also made especial hits at our opening performances. Our menagerie, consisting of twelve cages, two elephants and two camels, in the hands of the original and only Mark Monroe, was a surprise even to old timers. Larry Moon has the one hundred and sixty head of stock in condition fully in keeping with his reputation as a boss hostler. Prof. W. H. Merrick's military band and band No. 2, under the direction of Prof. Savage, are both made up of solo artists. E. M. Burke, superintendent, keeps things moving in his usual prompt and efficient manner. Manager M. B. Raymond's watchful eye is open and the show moves along in every department."

Rain in Massillon became a deluge. The circus grounds became horribly soggy despite loads of straw. The second day brought 500 in the afternoon and 1,400 at night. The lot was was very soggy and discouraged some of the locals. Grapewine was forced to cut out the opening tournament and the jockey races because

of the soft hippodrome track.

The second stand of the second tour was Canton, Ohio for two days. The show ground was high and well drained where the tents were raised. The afternoon drew 600 and the night show had 1,200.

But the storms continued, the creeks and rivers rose, and the circus had barely moved from Massillon when it was covered by the overflowing Tuscarawas river. Wetter then played one day stands in Navarre, Beach City and Canal Dover. Everywhere the circus went the rain went

Wet weather, cyclones and hard times in the spring of 1894 were a combination that could not be combated. The rain kept the patrons away and young Albert's capital was shrinking fast. He became ill and returned home after only about two weeks on the road.

Wetter's father prevailed on him to

close the show and bring it back to Massillon with the promise of opening a bank and making him president and sometime in the future financing a railroad show. The senior Wetter kept his promise and organized the State Bank, which operated until at least 1935.

This after notice appeared in the Belmont, County, Ohio Chronicle on June 7: "The Wetter show gave two performances here Thursday of last week, May 31, and did very small on account of rain and cold weather. The show started about two weeks before it reached here, and had rainy days for each performance. This, taken with the fact that that young Wetter who owns and manages the whole thing, is at home with mumps, determined the acting manager to ship from this place all of his paraphernalia back to Massillon, where the show started from. The scheduled engagement were cancelled, and the performers were discharged. It is understood that the owners will sell the show and go out of business. In driving from Cadiz here, a man was knocked off a wagon by a tree limb."

The June 16 Clipper carried a short note on the Wetter closing: "M. B. Raymond, manager of Albert M. Wetter's show writes us as follows: 'Owing to the illness of A. M. Wetter, the show bearing his name closed at St. Clairsville, Ohio on May 31. Everybody connected with the enterprise received their salary in full, and the show was shipped to winter quarters. It is quite possible the show will be reorganized, should Mr. Wetter regain his health; but should it again take the road it will be as a railroad show, its owner's constitution not being strong enough to endure the hardships of wagon show

Wetter had been carried away with his enthusiasm to enlarge his show, convinced that he was indeed a gifted showman-after one season. He spent wildly on equipment and hired expensive acts and paid them rail show salaries. When he left winter quarters he did not have much money to operate on. It was re-

Different paintings appeared on each of the Wetter wagons.

ported that Wetter lost a large amount of

But Albert wanted to keep trying. He published an advertisement in the June 29, 1894 New York Clipper wanting people for Albert M. Wetter's Great Railroad shows.

But it was no use, Wetter was finished in the circus business. The horses, mules, ponies and harness were sold, without reserve, at a public auction on June 21. H. B. Gentry bought the ponies and dogs. Alice the elephant was sold to Ringling Bros., joining that show on July 23, 1894.

The July 12, 1894 Independent reported: "The Wetter shows gave a performance at Massillon on the 3rd, but owing to the failure of the party who had purchased the outfit from Mr. Wetter to show up financially the show was not allowed to leave Massillon and is still in the city. A second auction of horses was announced for July 14.

If the show had the expensive wagons boasted about in the Clipper articles it is strange that there is no record of them turning up on other shows.

In the fall of 1894 Jacob Coxey leased the big top, and seating and wagons to carry it all. Coxey was on a speaking campaign tour for election to congress on the People's Party ticket from the 18th congressional district of Ohio.

After his circus experience Wetter joined the family business in banking and commerce. On October 5, 1901 comitted suicide at age 32. He shot himself in the left breast directly over his heart with a 38 caliber revolver found lying at his feet. His friends and family had no idea why he had taken his life. At the time of his death he was a director and principal stockholder of the Massillon State Bank and president of the Wetter Steel Sand Company. He never married.

Some material in this article came from the George L. Chindahl files at the Circus World Museum.



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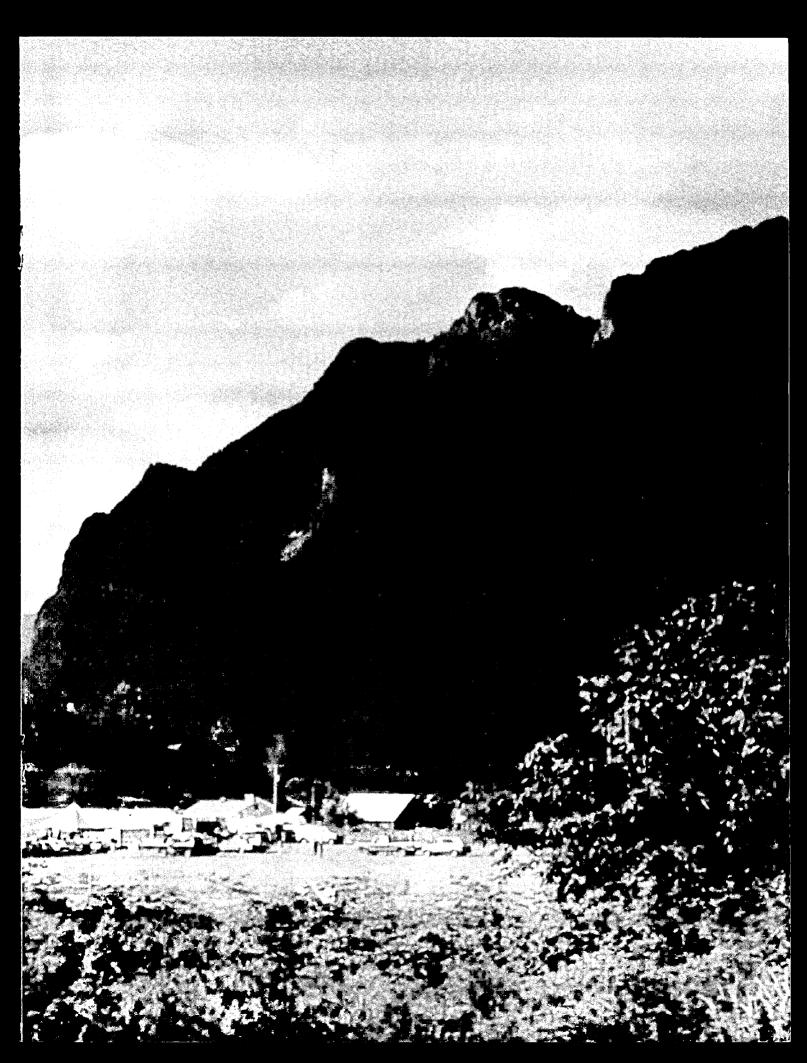
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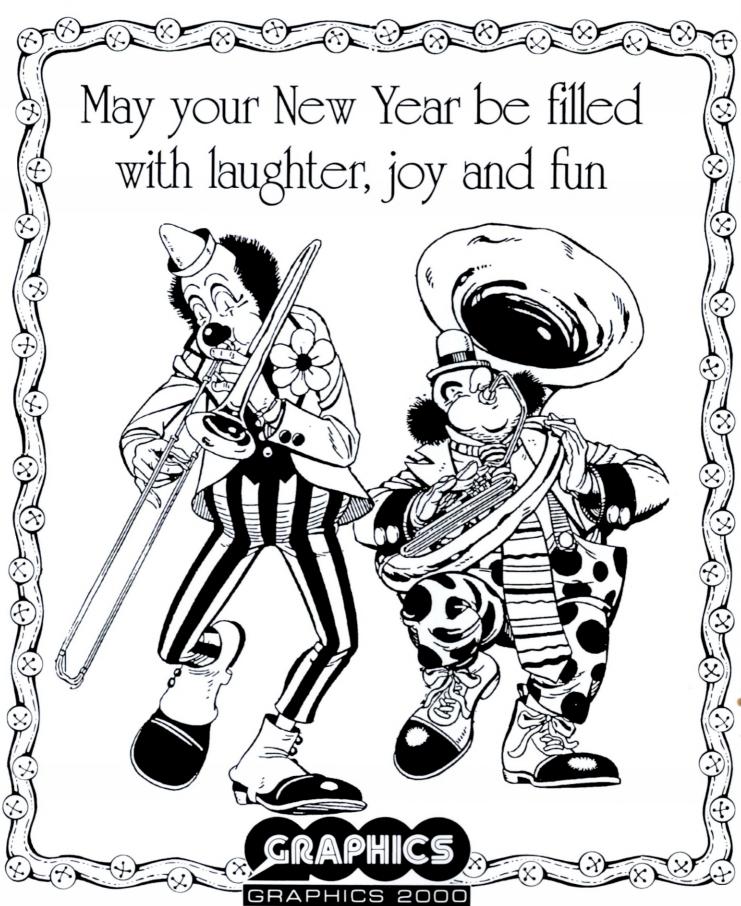
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THOMAS PAUL PARKINSON

1921 -- 1993

Tom Parkinson couldn't remember when the circus became part of his identity, perhaps because it always was. As a child he combined the normal youthful attraction to the color and pageantry of shows with a very atypical fascination with the logistics of the circus—the why and the how of the thousands things that had to go right before the ringmaster blew his whistle to start the show. He couldn't pinpoint the first circus he attended, but he had distinct memories of his father carrying him across a muddy John Robinson lot in 1929 when he was eight years old.

Parkinson became an ardent circus fan in the early 1930s when he began collecting memorabilia. He and his younger brother Bob, who shared his obsession, became chronic lot lice whenever a circus played their home town of Decatur, Illinois. Friendships with showfolks developed, and Parkinson fondly recalled the kindness of such troupers as P. G. Lowery, Arthur Borella, and especially Bill Woodcock. An interest in the history of circuses soon developed, and he began

recording data on show history on the first of what became thousands of note cards.

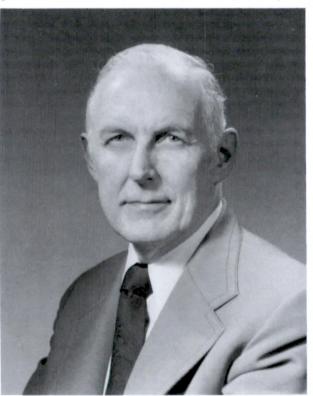
He and Bob also built model circuses. Tom's miniature troupe was called Al G. Floto. At one time he also owned the family rights to the John Robinson title, which through some long forgotten machinations, he either sold or traded to Bob who, like Jerry Mugivan, needed the name "John" to create his John Robbins model show.

He entered Millikin College in Decatur in the fall of 1939, and transferred after two years to the University of Illinois where he received his undergraduate degree in 1943. His career as a journalist began during his college years when he worked on the Decatur Herald-Review part time and the Daily Illini as senior editor. He was called to active duty in 1943 after joining the army enlisted reserves the year before. As a member of the 80th Infantry Division of George Patton's Third Army, he landed in France in 1944 and participated in the Battle of the Bulge.

While stationed overseas he visited about half a dozen war-ravished circuses.

In 1947 Parkinson, fresh with a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern, married Margaret Gill, and the young couple trooped off to Shreveport, Louisiana where he became the city hall reporter for the Shreveport Times, covering such events as the inauguration of Gov. Earl Long. In 1949 he made his first significant contribution to circus history, an article on the closing of the Older and Chandler Circus in Shreveport in 1873. Originally appearing as a feature story in the Times, it was revised for the July-August 1949 White Tops. He was rewarded for his effort with a fan letter from Col. C. G. Sturtevant, then the doyen of circus historians, which thrilled the twenty-eight year old author. Perhaps remembering Sturtevant's kind gesture, Parkinson was unfailingly generous in his praise of younger writers who plowed the fields of circus history.

Tom Parkinson. University of Illinois photograph.



In the spring of 1950 he joined the *Billboard* in Chicago as an associate editor reporting on circuses, amusement parks, ice shows, and other live show business. He quickly mastered the Runyonesque syntax of that august journal where headlines such as "Hoppy Pulls 'Em, But Cole Still Second Fiddles RB" were the norm.

His years at the Billboard were a golden age of circus coverage as he combined his vast knowledge of the business and its history with elegant prose to produce some of the finest writing ever on the subject. Unlike so much current commentary on circuses, Parkinson's coverage was insightful, honest, and often contained a historical perspective. He always wrote with great affection. If a show carried grift, for example, he would note that there was more action on the midway than under the big top," which tipped off the show-smart without exposing the troupe's sins to the general public. He was proud that the Littleford family, which owned the Billboard, supported him when John and Henry North complained about an article he wrote about

Ringling-Barnum.

His biographies of show greats and feature stories in Billboard should be required reading for all circus historians. Starting with a profile of William "Hopalong Cassady" Boyd in June 1950, he wrote dozens of profiles of the famous and the infamous in the business including Karl Wallenda, Ira Watts, Tom Packs, Orrin Davenport and Floyd King. His longer articles, often appearing in the venerable Spring Special, have stood the test of time. These included major pieces on Shrine circuses, bug men, side show banners, and big top chanteys. His 1952 elephant census became an important historical document, and his 1956 examination of the fall of Ringling-Barnum

He also wrote numerous noncircus features which reflected his eclectic and often quirky interests in subjects such as organ grinders, steam tractors, and whale shows. Another piece speculated on the problems the man-

was a penetrating diagnosis.

agers of ancient Rome's Colosseum must have encountered.

The *Billboard's* circus coverage declined in the late 1950s as the industry entered a down period. By then the great, glorious "Outdoor" section, which always included at least two meaty pages of circus news, was pared back and tepidly renamed "Show News" with far less circus coverage as the magazine became more and more a music publication. At the end of 1960, *Billboard* stopped reporting outdoor show business altogether.

Amusement Business, that stepchild of a magazine created by Billboard to maintain a presence in the outdoor amusement field, premiered on January 9, 1961 with Parkinson as feature editor. The new weekly struggled from the start to find editorial direction. Amid the turmoil, Parkinson resigned after five months. During his unhappy tenure he continued to write what was left of the circus coverage, and wrote four feature articles.



Parkinson with Herman and Mary Linden awaiting the Ringling-Barnum second section in Chicago on August 1, 1947.

Parkinson's legacy from his *Billboard* days is enormous. His week-to-week reporting on the circus business is an indispensable resource for historians; his biographies and features articles remain in most cases the best, and in many the only, information on their subjects. His performance reviews are models of first rate criticism, the likes of which have rarely been seen since. In later years he marvelled that his *Billboard* work was cited in historical books and articles as a primary source. Above all, he set a standard for lucid and insightful analysis of the circus which few have equalled.

In 1952 Parkinson became *Billboard's* first department head for the booming arena and auditorium business. In 1960 he visited the University of Illinois to do a



Alex Clark, Parkinson, Johann and Fred Dahlinger at the Great Circus Parade in 1987. Fred Pfening Jr. photo.

story on its new arena, then in the initial stages of construction. When he was shown the blueprints of the proposed facility, he was appalled to discover that the building was inadequate for many of the events the school anticipated using it for. He wrote the university about the problems he foresaw and suggested design changes. One of them was ridiculously simple: a truck entrance. School officials were so impressed with Parkinson's scathing critique that they offered him the job of manager.

He became director of the University of Illinois Assembly Hall in 1961, working with the architects and contractors to re-

Parkinson and Fred Pfening Jr. at the 1993 Great Circus Parade. He attended all the Milwaukee parades, spending most of the time talking circus with his friends. Nancy Cutlip photo.

design the building before its March 1963 opening. The position gave him the opportunity to implement all the good ideas he had observed in his ten years as the country's only reporter whose beat included arenas. He likened it to a sports writer becoming a coach.

The Assembly Hall became the first collegiate multi-purpose arena. Among Parkinson's many technological innovations were a portable basketball court, mechanized theater rigging over the central floor, and a seating pattern that eliminated any aisles leading directly to the stage. Equally impressive was his pioneering management techniques which included a contract in which the arena assumed part of the financial risk for events.

He became a legend in the arena management profession. He was a key figure in bringing the university arena out of the field house era in which the building only hosted sporting events to the multipurpose age in which the facility presented almost any kind of entertainment



from basketball to rock concerts to tour-

ing Broadway.

His innovative contracts allowed the Assembly Hall to attract the biggest names in show business such as Elvis Presley, the Rolling Stones, Bob Hope and Jefferson Airplane. He engaged many Broadway plays and musicals including Annie and Hello Dolly. Ice Capades was an annual visitor, and in what was the ultimate labor of love, Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey appeared in his building many times.

In 1985 he was in charge of the university's responsibilities for the first Farm Aid Concert which was held at the foot-

ball stadium next to the Assembly Hall. He considered it the high point of his work at Illinois. It was, he wrote, "an unbelievable month of no sleep and lots of work," but "an experience I would not have missed for the world."

He left the Assembly Hall in 1987, becoming an arena consultant. In his busy retirement he worked with about thirty buildings, and was conducting a comprehensive survey of arenas at the time of his death. He was considered the dean of

arena managers.

His love of the circus and its history was a constant of his adult life. As he matured his study of show history became more sophisticated. In the beginning he was content to record the bare bones statistics of the circus, for example, the number of flatcars on the Ringling train. Later, he wanted to

know what Ringling put on those flats, how they loaded and unloaded them, and why they did it. While his interests tended more toward the business than the artistic side of the circus, he was well versed in all facets of show history. On one of his last research trips, in fact, he investigated 19th century Presbyterian mo-

ral opposition to circuses.

Parkinson learned his history on Saturdays and at lunch in the 1950s. When he first started at the Billboard one of his jobs, by virtue of his lack of seniority, was to answer the office phone on Saturdays in case any late breaking news was called in. He used the time to study the bound volumes of back issues and take voluminous notes. Virtually every day he ate his noon meal at the famed Atwell Luncheon Club, the mid-day gathering place for showmen in Chicago, picking the brains of his contemporaries and the memories of the old timers. He had a wide correspondence with troupers, particularly Bill Woodcock, who was something of a mentor to him, and with whom he exchanged hundreds of letters. When he traveled extensively in his later years, he used his free time to do research in local archives and libraries. He was one of the first to tape record interviews with circus professionals.

Besides his corpus of work in the *Bill-board*, his towering reputation as a historian rests on the three books he wrote with Charles Philip Fox: *The Circus in America* (1969), *The Circus Moves by Rail* (1978), and *Billers, Banners and Bombast: The Story of Circus Advertising* (1985). The first remains the best overview of the American circus, and the latter two the

Parkinson, a voracious reader, in the book lined living room of his home in 1982. Margaret Parkinson photo.

definitive works on their subjects. All were grandly illustrated, often with photos unknown to other sawdust scholars. The volumes were all path breaking works, full of observations and information Parkinson had accumulated in decades of research. They also contained scores of insights he had gleamed from his contacts with showmen, little nuggets of data and telling anecdotes they shared with him at the Atwell club, on show lots and in bars. By circus book standards, all three were best sellers with the train book going into a second printing.

The best is yet to come. For over thirty years he and Fox collaborated on a massive history of the American circus entitled *The Circus--Mighty Monarch of All Amusements*. They always called it "the big book." Except for updating new discoveries, the text was completed years

ago; only a series of soap opera-like difficulties with publishers has prevented its appearance. Long term projects on the Mighty Haag Circus and Christy Bros. Circus were also uncompleted at the time of his death.

He disseminated circus history in many other ways. He composed thumb nail sketches of over a hundred shows as an appendix to John and Alice Durant's *Pictorial History of the American Circus*, and wrote the circus entry for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He taught an adult education course on circus history at the University of Illinois, and did television commentary on the Milwaukee circus parade ten

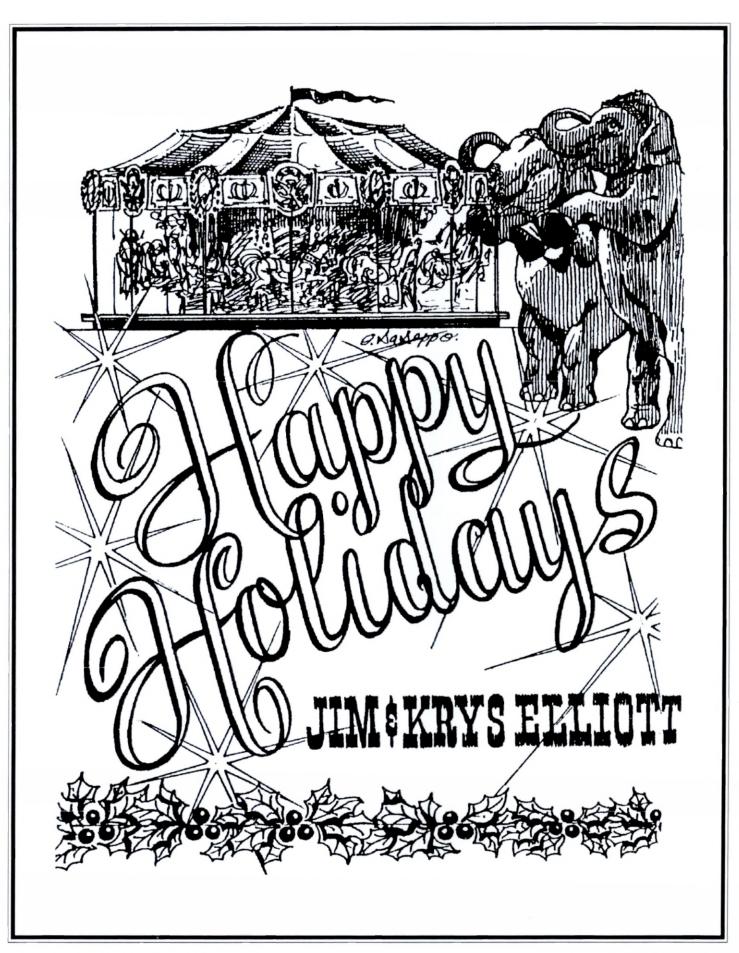
times.

Parkinson joined the Circus Historical Society in 1941, being assigned membership number thirty-one. His first published article on show history—a short piece on the Yankee Robinson Circus—was published in the old mimeographed *Bandwagon* in February 1943. He wrote the season's review five times in the 1960s, and an important series on William P. Hall in 1973 and 1974. His last *Bandwagon* by-line was a review of Michael Burke's memoirs in 1985.

He served the association in other ways. In the late 1950s he was one of the small group that revitalized *Bandwagon*. As vice-president in 1962 and 1963 he was instrumental in resolving the organization's financial crisis. He served as CHS president from 1978 to 1981, and was the banquet speaker at the 1983 Akron meeting.

Parkinson was on the founding board of the Circus World Museum from the middle 1950s until the museum was deeded to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin on opening day in 1959. He helped the museum acquire artifacts and collections, and was a sounding board—a one man kitchen cabinet as it were—to Chappie Fox when he was the museum's director. After Fox resigned in 1972, Parkinson turned down an offer to become his successor.

He is survived by his wife Margaret; two children, Richard and Ann; two grandchildren; his mother; and hundreds of friends. His death on November 14 of heart failure was a great loss to the circus history community which will deeply miss his remarkable knowledge, beautiful prose, and most of all, his warm and steadying personality. When Bill Woodcock died in 1963, Parkinson wrote a friend: "He was a great guy, great historian, great trouper." So was Tom Parkinson. Fred D. Pfening III.



IN MEMORY OF DAVE MULLANEY



SHOWMAN, COLLECTOR, FRIEND

AL AND SHIRLEY STENCELL

the circus opened its 1952 season in New York's Madison Square Garden, Vernon Rice, one of New York's most respected drama critics at that time, filed the following notice: "Pick out any or all of the adjectives found in the voluminous 1952 program of Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus . . . and apply them to Miles White, the designer. Work from amazing, through gorgeous, peerless, exciting, eminent, astonishing, topflight, matchless, ex-

traordinary, down to the final clossal, and you have some of the words applicable to White's contribution to the 82nd annual edition of the greatest show on earth."

What is remarkable about the review, aside from the rather broad hint it gives of the enormous contribution Miles White made to the Ringling circus between 1941 and 1955, is the fact that the circus' opening was reviewed by a first string drama critic at all.

It was not always thus. Until Norman Bel Geddes lent his enormous reputation to John Ringling North's circus, its New York opening in Madison Square Garden was usually covered by the same sports writers who reported on the other events that took place at the famous arena. Before he got the critics, however, Bel Geddes first attracted other notables to the circus: people like John Murray Anderson, George Balanchine and Igor Stravinsky. Together they turned the circus into something worthy of the attention of the city's dramatic critics.

Of course, it wasn't Bel Geddes work, exactly, that caught everyone's eye when they came to see the show. The designer of General Motor's Futurama at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City was more interested in modernizing the circus's mechanics than he was in designing its props and costumes. He was particularly absorbed with the idea of designing a poleless big top, and eventually even built a prototype for it.

The job of designing the circus' costumes, floats, props and decor, therefore, fell to Miles White, who was, at that point, one of many designers who toiled anonymously under the Bel Geddes

That the task of designing something like a circus should fall to someone like Miles White and that he should have done it so brilliantly is one of the numerous incongruities in a life filled with contradictions.

White was, at the time, a very shy, 27 years old costume designer who already had to his credit two Broadway shows

MILES WHITE The Livile Eccentric Whith the Big Talent By E. J. Albrecht

and numerous night club reviews including several staged at New York's famed Copacabana. Nonetheless, he found himself, at this point in his career "between engagements." And while nothing in his background could have predicted his past successes there was even less to suggest the amazing feat he would pull off with the circus. He gave The Greatest Show on Earth glamor and beauty.

White's paternal ancestors were pilgrims and pioneers. Those on his mother's side of the family include the founder of the American Swedish Baptist Church. In spite of having been raised in a staid and conservative Methodist home in Oakland, California, the young White found something irresistibly appealing in such forbidden fruits as *Vanity Fair*

magazine, the Hearsts' newspapers Sunday supplement *The American Weekly*, and the speakeasies of San Francisco, all of which conspired eventually to send him to seek his fortune in New York City.

This photo of Miles White appeared in the 1949 Ringling-Barnum program. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless other identified.

He was first hired by Bel Geddes-whom he never really saw-to design the costumes for Sonja Henie's It Happened On Ice at the Center Theater, which he did with

much success, so when the circus assignment came along it seemed a natural follow up. In both cases the arrangement was rather simple. White did the sketching. Bel Geddes got the credit. The circus paid Bel Geddes an enormous fee, and Bel Geddes paid White his usual salary of \$75 per week. It wasn't much, but it kept the

young designer from having to write home for money.

For his first circus in 1941 White decided to do the major production number or "Spec" as if all its characters were French porcelain figurines. That meant most of the a white background with an enormous amount of appliques, stencils and embroidery to suggest the painting usually done on such porcelain.

Many of these costumes were worn by the roustabouts, those members of the circus

troupe who, if seen close up, would resemble nothing so much as the gang of grizzled derelicts and tattooed winos that in fact they often were. They hated having anything to do with what they called "the walk around" (an expression that aptly characterized the amount of acting effort that usually went into their performance), and they hated the uncomfortable costumes they were forced to wear even more.

Awaiting their cues backstage at Madison Square Garden they would sit or lie about on the dirty steps or the dirtier ramp that led from the basement where the animals were quartered to the arena upstairs oblivious to the artistic merit of the costumes in which they lounged about. To keep the costumes looking their

best, at least through the New York run of the show, White, in des-

peration, made it a practice to circulate through the backstage area with a bag of nickels which he dispensed as bribes to keep these gentlemen, otherwise known around the circus as "the roughnecks," on their feet.

To a man they greeted this strange behavior with delighted hilarity. Of course, they took the nickels to stash away for their next bottle of rot gut, and

to make sure they got it, they would purposefully sit around awaiting the next nervous appearance of "that crazy costume designer."

In an attempt to disguise the open disgust or bleary-eyed oblivion the roustabouts normally displayed when paraded before the public, an attitude that did little to brighten their unwashed and unshaven mugs, White eventually learned to include in the designs for their characters either a paper mache head piece or a hat with a very



wide brim, which he insisted they wear as low as possible across their foreheads. The headpieces were decorated with colorful and pleasant expressions that tended to defeat the gloom and deflect the swearing that was going on inside them.

White first became aware of the enormous influence welded by the Bel Geddes' office, not only with the circus, but the theatrical world in general, when he discovered that he was able to have

these masks created by the noted sculptor Raymond Bufano. After that, getting the sawdust dyed hyacinth blue, proved that anything was possible if it were suggested to John Ringling North by Norman Bel Geddes.

A year later, after the 1942 season, when Johnny North was ousted from the presidency of the circus by his disgruntled relatives White was interviewed by North's successor, Robert Ringling who was considering engaging him as designer. Ringling offered White the then munificent fee of \$5,000 to hire him away from Bel Geddes and come to work exclusively for the circus. During the course of the discussion the circus' new president made mention of the paper mache heads, noting that they were difficult to pack. White defended them by pointing out that they kept the roustabouts'

grim and unsmiling faces hidden.
Ringling's response assured the designer that working for this branch of the Ringling family wasn't going to be nearly as enchanting as it had been with Johnny. "In Germany," Ringling announced without so much as a trace of humor, "we have ways of making them smile."

White declined Ringling's offer, and Johnny, hearing of this, took the refusal as an act of allegiance toward him and was, at least momentarily, "forever" grateful. He insisted that White return to the circus as its designer when he regained control in 1946.

The 1941 circus was choreographed by Albertina Rasch whom Bel Geddes had hired based on the work she had done the year before in creating a dream ballet with a circus motif for Gertrude Lawrence's show Lady in the Dark. Madame Rasch was a large, imposing figure at the circus rehearsals, but her work was rather stiff and didn't quite work in the arena, so in 1942 Bel Geddes began looking around for someone to replace her.

Miles White had known of John Murray Anderson's work for some time and admired it enormously. It had, in fact, long been one of his ambitions to work with the noted director who was re-

nowned for a wicked sense of humor which he used to torture people.

White recommended Anderson to Tommy Farrar, who as Bel Geddes' general factorum was in a position to pass the suggestion along to Bel Geddes himself. They all seemed to like the idea. So that Anderson would remember him with some touch of kindness when it came time to assign nicknames White made sure that the information that he had been



White fitting ballet girls at Brooks Costume Co. in the spring of 1942. Pfening Archives.

hired at White's recommendation was dutifully passed along to the director. That, too, was left to Tommy Farrar. It seemed to work. White became know around the circus as The Little Eccentric, and Anderson later repaid the favor by having White design the new Ziegfeld Follies show which he staged for the Shuberts the next year. They also collaborated on a later edition of Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe, for which Anderson was justifiably famous.

John Ringling North also liked the idea of hiring Anderson, so apparently White had scored a hit all around.

The director revised the entire look and format of the circus presentation giving it some logical order and theatrical build. His ideas about how the show should be organized also began to give White some ideas of his own.

Ironically it was his initial anonymity that gave White the opportunity to turn the circus into the kind of theatrical spectacle Anderson envisioned and so impressed Vernon Rice and his colleagues. In 1942, White decided that the only way he could turn the circus into the stylish extravaganza that he imagined was by designing not only the spec and such production numbers as the aerial ballet, the manege, the elephant act and finale, but all the costumes for all the individual acts as well. He got North to accept this added expense by having it presented to him by no less a force than Bel Geddes.

"Johnny was so impressed with having

Norman Bel Geddes working for him, that he accepted my idea without question," White recalls with ironic glee.

Having won the right to design the entire production added enormously to White's design burden. To keep it all organized he devised huge, complicated color charts of the show once he got the running order from Pat Valdo.

First he laid out the colors to be used in the spec, so as not to repeat himself. Next he plotted out, with almost mathematical precision, the colors to be used in the individual acts. This planning was necessary to keep from using a particular color until it had appeared in one of the major acts and to keep the colors separated. In that way the appearance of a new color was designed to bring on a new excitement, and the progression of color was calculated to build to a

climax in the star acts, for whom White saved certain of his favorite colors like lemon yellow or pure white.

Before any of this could be begun, however, White had to choose the colors he would use for his background, the sawdust used on the arena floor in Madison Square Garden, as well as in the ring carpets and the arena decor.

Obviously it all worked, as Rice further notes in the same review: "Green predominates at all times. Next are the stripes of rose and silver. From there you can go to the purples and the yellows and the varying shades and combinations in between. If the truth must be told, White has so dramatized the excitement of the circus in his costumes and decor, all the performer has to do is to step forward and do his tricks and he seems spectacular whether he is or not."

In White's second season with the circus, 1942, when he began designing for the individual performers, he was also allowed to join the crowd from the Bel Geddes office that went down to Sarasota, Florida, to take part in the circus' winter preparations. That trip turned out to be the first of many such excursions over the next several years as the New York de-

signer became a treasured fixture among the locals and other winter guests.

Sarasota at that time was a rather deserted village on the Gulf coast that came alive each winter thanks mainly to the presence of The Greatest Show on Earth which had its winter quarters there. Otherwise it was known principally for its asparagus and Chinese vegetable farms.

The Ringling family was among the most prominent members of Sarasota society. Ida Ringling North, the only sister of the famed Ringling brothers, lived in isolated, jungle-like splendor on Bird Key. This sweet, white-haired lady counted among her friends a delightful character, The Countess Olga de Balieff, who also became a great friend of White's, as well.

Since the only forms of vegetation on the Countess' property were scrubby looking pine trees and palmettoes, she somehow inveigled Ida into digging up a

pair of her giant royal palms and having them shipped over to Siesta Key for replanting in front of her house.

Apparently Olga also felt such generosity carried with it a guarantee of satisfaction. When one of palm trees Ida North sent over from Bird Key died, Olga insisted that it was Ida's responsibility to have it replaced.

The Countess lived in a continual and hilarious state of blissful confusion, and her garbled English did little to sort out the chaos.

Sometimes she could be barely understood, and then it took the application of some convoluted logic

to find out what it was she was talking about. As for instance the time she called to tell White the news about her dear friend Ida North.

When Ida died, her family chose not to have a funeral, and so rather than being interred, her earthly remains were unceremoniously placed in a receiving vault at the local undertakers until such time as the family decided what they wanted to do with her. The mortuary happened to be located across the street from one of Sarasota's best known supermarkets.

These are the facts as White later pieced them together out of Olga's distraught telephone call that began with the announcement that she had "Terrible news. Terrible."

"What is it?" White asked trying to get her to calm down.

"It's terrible. Terrible."

"Just tell me what it is," he pleaded.

"Ida's on ice at the A & P."

Working with Murray on the circus through the winter of 1942 was a time filled with great hilarity. The reason he gave for insisting that he had to give everyone a name of his own devising was that he could never remember anyone's real name. The new monickers he created for everyone were always based on some fact or detail known only to him. How he could remember the name of an old vaudeville act and not a person's given name no one ever knew, but it was one of the wonders and delights of working with him.

These nicknames were a highly esteemed badge of honor prized by any who received one. The Broadway producer Saint Subber, for instance, worked as Anderson's production assistant, or "goffer," on The 1943 Ziegfeld Follies. Since he had an uncanny way of anticipating the director's every need, Anderson was finally moved to announce, "You're a saint!" Subber was delighted. He never even flinched when Anderson tied a little bell around his neck so his whereabouts



Mrs. Ida Ringling North with sons Henry and John in 1941.

would always be known. "Where's the saint?" Murray would ask when he needed something, and Subber would shake his bell and come running. So pleased was the young man with the name Anderson had given him that he eventually had his name legally changed, and he became everyone's Saint Subber.

Anderson's manner of dealing with people was unique. Somehow he always found a way of making the unpleasant task of keeping even the most fractious characters in line amusing, so it was impossible for anyone to be offended by his constant hectoring. One of the most difficult people he had to deal with around the circus was Barbette, the aerial director.

Barbette took his androgynous name when he left his native Texas to become a female impersonator in the music halls of Europe where, dressed as as a glamorous woman, he became an aerialist and an international celebrity. His costumes came from the most fashionable coutieres of Paris. So stunning and thorough was the impersonation that he was wined and dined by many aristocratic men who fell in love with the illusion he managed to create and maintain even at close range.

He came to the circus through Anderson with whom he had worked on Billy Rose's Jumbo. He was still working as an aerialist then. During a performance he fell from the trapeze, shattering all the bones in his right hand and arm. After months of hospitalization and having to endure the pain of having many of the bones rebroken and reset, his hand remained permanently twisted. It was set in a flexed position with the fingers fixed in a perpetual curl. Although he was able to climb the aerial rigging and demonstrate for the girls in the circus' aerial ballet, he never again performed.

That disappointment and frustration made him even more bitchy than he had

previously been when he was in high drag. His tongue was one of the most brilliantly waspish that anyone had ever encountered. Depending upon where it was aimed, it could be both amusing and alarming. Given the opportunity he could certainly have been the most vicious character around the circus. Anderson was determined not to give him that opportunity.

Needless to say Barbette had very strong ideas about style which he tried to express as often as possible. As the director, however, Anderson's word was law. He was not about to tolerate the tantrums or listen to the unsolicited suggestions of

anyone else. To keep Barbette from making a fuss the director delayed showing him White's costume sketches for the aerial ballet until they had been approved by Johnny North at which point it was too late for Barbette to insist on any further changes.

To maintain this secrecy, Anderson had to enlist the help of the designer, who was under strict orders not to show the sketches to anyone but to Anderson, personally. Barbette's desperate desire to get a look at the designs did make it seem rather amusing to keep them from him, particularly since Anderson made it all seem like a delightful game, and far from being malicious, Murray Anderson's manner of dealing with Barbette was really rather practical.

There was another reason White choose to go along with this ploy so willingly. Since he was rather shy, he knew Anderson would take particular glee in subjecting him to public embarrassment, and so White became the director's accomplice in Barbette's torture partly in the vain

hope of having Anderson take pity and leave him alone in the future.

Or perhaps it was really to win his affection, which, it turned out, Murray Anderson expressed in the form of public humiliation. Such exposure was reserved for the people he liked most and whom he knew would be amused by his teasing. Like being given a special name, being made a public spectacle of by John Murray Anderson was really like being admitted to a special group, and so although on the one hand White hoped he wouldn't be embarrassed, he would have been more hurt if he hadn't been.

The 1942 circus featured what was billed as *The Elephant Ballet*. George Balanchine was engaged to provide the choreography and Igor Stravinsky the score. It was put together at the circus' winter quarters where, at the beginning of rehearsals, everyone was normally rather tense. With all the high powered talent around that year the cast and crew were more tense than usual. Anderson liked to help everyone relax by amusing them with some joke or provide the needed laugh.

At some unguarded moment before rehearsals had begun White had off handedly mentioned that he could execute a particularly flashy ballet maneuver called a tour jete. That was just the sort of confession Murray loved to make public, possible, a moment Murray had an unerring instinct for finding. White's moment came during the first day of rehearsals. After the staff was introduced to the cast An-

Norman Bel Geddes redesigned the circus for the 1942 season.



derson solemnly announced that he wanted to give the ballet girls a lesson in proper ballet technique. The demonstration, he said, would be provided by none other than The Little Eccentric, Miles White.

Horrified, White begged off and tried melting into the crowd. It was just the sort of reaction Anderson needed to heighten everyone's amusement. The more Miles White protested, the more Anderson insisted, and the more delighted everyone seemed to be. Finally White realized that Anderson was not going to give up until he had done what had been demanded.

The director refused to start the rehearsal until White had come into the center ring and done his little turn. The designer knew the jig was up. He was a little rusty, but he got through the ballet maneuver with surprising success. The resulting ovation assured him he would never hear the end of it. And he didn't. White's desperate tour jete became a running gag.

In a vain attempt at avoiding having to perform any encores of his dance, White took to disappearing around the time rehearsals were scheduled to start each day. That turned out to be just the sort of opportunity Anderson needed to ring a few more variations out of the routine. He flushed White out with his microphone, a favorite toy which he used to full effect in making sure that no one missed any of his merciless ragging.

"This rehearsal cannot begin until the Little Eccentric does his tour jete," he would announce with mock irritation. "He is wasting the circus' money and ruining the whole show by keeping everyone waiting."

That usually did the trick. White would emerge rather sheepishly from whatever temporary sanctuary he had found and perform the required dance.

As time passed, however, his performance became considerably less spectacular than it had been when it was first introduced. The once grand tour jete became more and more earth bound as winter wore on toward spring, but a rehearsal never could begin in earnest until it had been performed, thereby satisfying Anderson's taste for the absurd. Once that ritual was disposed of the director became instantly magnamious. "Fine," he would say, "now we can begin."

Anderson had other ways of keeping everyone happy during the rehearsal period. It was his custom, for years, prior to each morning's rehearsal to deliver what amounted to a public announcement of all the errant behavior that had taken place the night before, of which he was kept apprised by a network of spies and confidantes. Although Anderson managed to induct White into this service, the



John Murray Anderson was legendary for his nicknames, including the one he gave White, "the little eccentric."

designer was careful to edit anything he told him, particularly anything about whatever mischief he might have been up to himself, knowing full well that it would almost certainly be repeated--in public, over the loudspeaker.

Nonetheless Anderson always seemed to know some of the most amazing details about the private affairs of various members of the cast. These he would reveal each morning with great wit and humor. Needless to say the cast adored these recitations. So outrageous were some of the scandals he exposed that they were only half believed even though everything he said was, of course, perfectly true and accurate. And rather than being horrified, those members of the cast or staff whose private lives had suddenly become public always seemed to enjoy their new found notoriety. They may even have given the director the details themselves. Whatever information he couldn't get directly from the source he got from his spies and informants.

Even back in New York, at times when they were not working together, Murray insisted that White, along with his other close friends, call him each night at midnight to report all the gossip of the day. He referred to these midnight revelations from his coterie as The Children's Hour.

In that same 1942 season George Balanchine insisted that the girls in the *Elephant Ballet* carry arched garlands, a prop that had, at the time, become something of his signature. White thought them rather silly but tried to find some way of keeping them from looking dated. He

ended up decorating them with French spring flowers and achieved an effect that was both chic and comic at the same time.

The elephants' tutus proved to be a more difficult challenge. White quickly realized that the only time whatever he designed was going to look like a ballet skirt was when the elephants stood up and did the long mount. In the meantime, the tutus had to be short enough to keep from being stepped on and sturdy enough to resist the elephants' desire to pull them off and eat them. They ended up being made of pink dyed canvas, a fabric which was a far cry from the airy netting usually used in tutus. Nonetheless White designed the elephants' version with the same pinked edging as those worn by the girls. He also created a considerably enlarged version of the girls' headdress for the elephants.

On opening night in New York the gala effect created by the costuming, the choreography and Igor Stravinsky's original score, was further enhanced by the appearance of Zorina, Ballachine's wife, in

the roll of the prima ballerina.

When the circus rehearsals at winter quarters moved from the tent to the outdoor arena—dubbed little Madison Square Garden since it was the exact dimensions of the New York arena—the proceedings were open to the many tourists who always seemed to be wandering around the grounds of winter quarters. Anderson's unique methods of scolding those whom he thought had been slack in their professional efforts often alarmed these unsuspecting civilians who had little idea he was joking.

Since, at this point in the rehearsals, most of the girls who appeared in the production numbers were usually more adept at hanging by their teeth than dancing, Anderson was forever urging the girls to keep in step. Of course he singled out the girls for praise or correction by using the nicknames he had given them.

He once caused a considerable stir among a crowd of tourists who had gathered to watch rehearsals one afternoon when he called out to one of the girls over the p. a. system in his cultured English accent. "Margaret Truman! You unfortunate girl! Why can't you do as you are told? Can't you keep time?"

There was considerable neck cranning and buzzing from the tourists who hadn't known that the President's daughter had

run away and joined the circus.

The truth was that Miss Truman had not actually left the comforts of Washington to strike out on the sawdust trail. One of the girls bore a remarkable resemblance to the President's daughter, and so Anderson had taken to calling her by that name.

The humor and style of Anderson's



Miles White in the mid 1940s. Miles White collection.

methods of handling people can best be appreciated when they are compared to those of his successor on the circus, Richard Barstow. Anderson had hired Barstow to choreograph the circus, and when he left the show, Barstow was suddenly elevated to the job of production director.

In addition to taking over Anderson's position, Barstow imitated his methods of handling both the performers--who at first viewed his very existence with skepticism—as well as the marginally talented, but beautiful showgirls--who were far more willing than able to do as he asked. Despite the similarity of the techniques the two men used in approaching these

George Balanchine, master of choreography and director of "The Ballet of the Elephants" in 1942.



variously talented people, in the beginning there always seemed to be a touch of frustration in Barstow's manner that was never present in Anderson's.

At the time that Barstow took over the staging of the circus Miles White suddenly found that he had to make a lot more of the decisions himself. "Since I was so involved with designing on Broadway at this time, I didn't have the time to spend waiting for others to decide what they wanted to do," White says by way of explaining his working relationship with the new director, a relationship that soon became as delightful as a collaboration of feathers and sequins.

After the Ziegfeld Follies, which opened the same week as Oklahoma! (another of Miles White's design triumphs), it was nearly five years before he and John Murray Anderson worked together again on the circus. By that time John Ringling North had regained control of the circus.

One of North's first moves was to bring Anderson back to stage the 1947 production. By then North was also fully aware that it was White who had done the work officially attributed to Norman Bel Geddes, and he was asked to design it

White accepted the circus offer with pleasure, despite warnings from friends that people in the theater would not take his work seriously if he did.

The working relationship between White and Anderson was as close as their friendship. "Murray and I spent a lot of time talking about the 'plot' of the spec, after which he would go off and produce a scenario. In addition to myself, copies of this went to Johnny, Pat Valdo, the personnel director, and whoever was writing the music that year," White recalls.

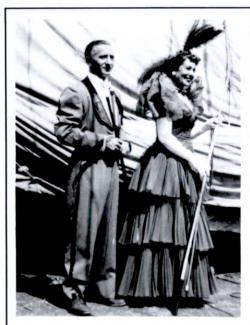
"I then consulted Valdo on the casting. He would tell me who was in each of the various acts, and how many midgets, clowns, and girls would be available for the spec. I then did a series of rough sketches of the various units and then taped them all together into one long drawing, which Murray used to plan his staging.

"Ideas for the various specs could come from any of us. I wanted to set the 1951 manege number in 18th century France and rather grandly suggested the title Fete Champetre Marie Antoinette. Johnny wisely

changed it to Picnic in the Park."

Anderson's scenarios always managed to tell a story of some sort and this narrative would provide the logic that would dictate the order for the various units. The first float in the spec was the theme float, and it always occupied the center ring.

Since many of the attractions were not booked until the early spring, White



Charles Morowski and wife Gina Lipowska in costumes designed by Miles White in 1949.

could not design the costumes for the individual acts until he got to Sarasota in March. Then it was a hectic rush to get the sketching done and the costumes built in time for the April opening in Madison Square Garden. The fittings were not completed until the show got to New York, the last two days before opening

"I always asked that Pat Valdo have the acts send me photographs of the clothes that they were currently using in the ring so I had some idea of what they liked to wear," White explains. "Usually they were delighted with what I gave them. Sometimes, however, it took some persuading.' He tried desperately and unsuccessfully to dissuade the star juggler Francis Brunn from the one piece suits with short pants on which he insisted. On the other hand, White recalls with affection, "I was always gratified by Gina Lipowska's reaction to my gowns. (She and her husband Charles Morowski displayed liberty horses.) And I always thought she wore them with enormous eclat."

Designing costumes for the circus was more than just a form of employment for White, however. From the very start he found himself fascinated by the circus people apart from their exploits in the arena. In many ways they were, he soon learned, very much a part of the scandalous world he had loved to read about in the Hearst Sunday supplements, when he was a boy. "And," he explains, "they appealed to me in much the same way that the honky tonk world of San Francisco had years before." The most fascinating of the circus's many characters was Arthur Concello.

Concello had once been a star flyer. Eventually he found out that he could make a lot more money with his feet on the ground.

After winning controlling interest of the circus in 1947, North put Concello in charge of running the entire show. The flyer gladly traded in his tights for a wardrobe of double breasted suits, flashy ties and the sort of broad brimmed hats favored by the characters in *Guys and Dolls*. His manner and style won him the nickname Little Caesar. But there was more to him than just the dangerous charm of a self confident tough customer.

Anderson called him The Artist, an obvious play on the name Arthur, but the label implied a respect and admiration that was impossible to deny the man. "He was, after all," White points out, "the only one around who made any sense and could be depended upon to make things work."

Being a man devoted to pragmatism in all things, Concello had every move of the circus planned out in infinite detail. As general manager he didn't intend to depend on luck or his charm to get him through the numerous pitfalls faced by a touring circus playing under a giant tent. He handled everyone, from the star performers to the most hardened roustabouts, with the same self-assured aplomb. He let them know he was the boss and that his word was law. Most of the time he ruled simply by the power of his presence. When anyone tried to work a new angle he usually found that Concello was one step ahead of him.

Concello tended to look upon those "outsiders" who descended on the circus every year from New York with both skepticism and suspicion. "He was never really sure the circus had any real need of our talents," White says. "So he adopted a wait and see policy. In the meantime he seemed to be rather amused by what he saw, especially of me."

Concello and White couldn't have been more unlike. Perhaps that disparity is what made each of them so intriguing to the other. "He found me as fascinating an oddity as I did him," White theories. "As a result, he seemed, at times, to take extreme delight in giving me a hard time, just to see how I would react. And then at other times he would go out of his way to make sure a float or spectacle piece I had designed worked the way I had envisioned it. Perhaps the fact that I never complained or acted as if I had expected any better treatment impressed him. At any rate we maintained an odd but rewarding friendship."

For a time North took it upon himself to protect the costume designer from his general manager. It was his way of paying off the debt he figured he owed White



White sketch for Pinto del Oro and Betty Hutton in the 1951 spec *Luwana Lady*. Miles White collection.

for not going to work for Robert Ringling.
Since at this period. White was often

Since, at this period, White was often designing Broadway shows at the same time as he was doing the circus, he could not always be present whenever Concello decided he had need of his services. "Johnny covered for me when I was in Philadephia a for the dress rehearsal and opening of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and missed one of Concello's production meetings," White remembers. "Tommy Farrar told Concello I had been off on a bender and was too far gone to make the meeting. Johnny corroborated that fact."

That sort of excuse was far more acceptable to Concello than running off to design a Broadway show, and backing it turned out to be what Johnny considered fair payment for White's loyalty back in 1943. "Now we're even," he told the designer sometime later. And henceforth White was left to his own devices in making his way around the circus, especially when it came to dealing with Concello who never stopped finding it amusing to strike terror in his heart.

One of Concello's most effective attempts at this involved what White considered a most convincing demonstration of who was boss. As White recalls the incident which took place during the summer of 1951, he was planning on working on the circus designs in a studio he had found in Malibu. It was in a section of the house owned by Jeff Donnell on Tobango Beach Road. Concello got wind of the designer's plans, which must have impressed him as being a bit too grand, and delivered an ultimatum.

"He wasn't about to let me get away

with any such pretensions," White explains. "And so he told me that either I had my designs finished and ready for him when the circus played Los Angeles on September 15 or he would throw me into the Pacific Ocean.

"Had this come from anyone else, I could have laughed it off as an exaggerated joke. Hearing it from my friend Concello, however, was another matter. I was sure he fully intended to do what he had said if I didn't live up to his timetable."

To ensure that he meet Concello's schedule White arranged to have Thomas Farrar come out to Malibu to assist him. Before Farrar left for the coast, however, he had a heart attack while painting his house on Fire Island and died.

"Since Tommy had come to be one of my best friends his death left me desolated. Unfortunately there was no time for mourning. I had to find someone to take his place as quickly as possible or I would have ended up in the Pacific Ocean," White remembers.

What Concello's threat added up to was that in addition to an enormous amount of work the designer was having to deal with a new deadline. He had to find someone to help him.

For some reason unbeknownst to them, people like White always seem to acquire, over the years of working in the business, what amounts to an entourage. It is never consciously arranged. It just seems to accumulate. Suddenly there it is, a group of people for whom one is more or less responsible. The amount of work involved in designing the circus, for instance, always necessitated having at least one person as talented as Tommy Farrar working in areas the designer knew little or nothing about.

Ever since White first met him at the Bel Geddes' office Farrar had handled all the detailed technical chores involved in building the floats and other paraphernalia with which the designer found myself involved--like the carpets he designed for the circus's three rings.

The ring carpets and the decor that was hung around the arena and balcony railings in the indoor engagements were all sewn of canvas in the sail loft on the second floor of the building in which the menagerie cages were stored during the off season. "Every time I went to inspect the work that had been completed [on these pieces] I was aware of a peculiar odor and a rather pleasant, yet incessant whistling sound," White recalls. "Peculiar smells are no oddity around the circus but this was more than usually peculiar. I eventually learned that both the smell and the whistling came from the guinea pigs that were kept below, cheerfully reproducing themselves as food for the side show snakes."

White had met Ralph "Peaceful" Allen

through the Farrars, at one of their parties out on Fire Island. "The first time I caught sight of him," White says, "he was hanging from one of their living room's exposed beams. He and Tommy had taken to swinging back and forth in opposite directions like a pair of over weight chim-

In many ways Allen and Farrar were very much alike. Both were older than White, and they were both large, rolypoly gentlemen who drank a great deal and had a wonderful sense of the ridiculous. "I always found myself laughing whenever I was with them," White says

Peaceful had recently run a book store called the Phoenix. It was an elegant and exotic little shop that went under shortly before Farrar died, leaving Peaceful, despite numerous impressive social connections, with no visible means of paying his bills. For a time Farrar and White had been helping him out with loans. Since White now needed an assistant, giving him a job seemed the perfect solution all around.

The circus' spec for the 1952 season was nostalgic whimsy based on a tune Johnny North had plunked out on a piano using nothing more than two fingers. The song was titled "The Good Old Days of Yore," and it concluded with the line: "Someday today will be the good old days of vore."

The production was to feature characters from various periods of history.

White decided to begin the spec in prehistoric Crete with a pagan feast.

On the day before Concello's promised visit he had completed the drawings for everything except what was called the elephant payoff. This was the culmination of the pageant, and it featured a half dozen or so elephants and a spectacular float. As the number's finale it was to deliver the 'payoff punch."

"On the evening before the day I was to meet Concello," White continues, "I hung the walls of the studio with all the sketches. He had been right, course, I was having a devil of a time, thanks to the various distractions,

meeting the schedule. Not all of the sketches had been colored, but I hung them up anyway, hoping to get them by Concello without ending up in the Pacific Ocean. There was, however, still the matter of the payoff section. There was no way I could get the designs past him without some kind of sketches for that section of the spec."

That night White went to dinner at a small seafood restaurant out on the highway, and before eating went to the bar for a drink or two which, given his state of anxiety, quickly became several more than that. "I soon found myself starring into the lobster tank nagged by the lyrics of Johnny's tune: 'Someday, today will be the good old days of yore.' After a few drinks my elephants and the lobsters sud-

denly merged.

He went back to his studio and designed a modern day celebration, turning the circus elephants into gorgeous, jeweled lobsters pulling a float topped off with a showgirl riding in a glass of champagne toasting today and "The Good Ole Days of Yore" at a modern-day, elegant supper. Thus he had found a way to end the spec, as it had begun, with a spectacular feast, this one considerably more elegant than the one that started it all off.

The next day two long, black limousines pulled up outside the house on

John North inspecting a showgirl's costume in the late 1940s. Miles White is in back of North, next to Pat Valdo.





Albert "Flo" White in a Miles White costume in 1951.

Tobango beach. "I was ready," White says with satisfaction, "and never got anywhere near the water."

(When the circus played New York and Boston, it was White's idea to have that champagne toast uncork a cataract of bubbles that cascaded from the Garden's ceiling, creating a vision Vernon Rice concluded was "master showmanship.")

Throughout White's involvement with the circus, Concello continued to teach him the facts of circus life. The morals of that area of the world, the designer soon learned, were quite different from those he had been taught during his Methodist upbringing, which simply proved to make them all the more agreeable.

One afternoon in winter quarters, for instance, White and Peaceful Allen were involved in a lengthy business meeting with Concello and his closest associates. It took place in one of the converted railway cars that sat near the entrance to the grounds and served as the show's main office. Since Concello and his men were never without their cigars the room quickly became choked with a thick cloud of smoke. Suddenly one of the general manager's field lieutenants rushed into the room and whispered something in his ear. Obviously whatever had been said was of the greatest interest to him. Concello jumped out of his chair, and not having to reach for his hat since it was always on his head, started for the door. On his way out he bent over to whisper to one of the other men who was immediately and similarly effected. The startling news thus circulated around the room. The designer and his assistant leaned forward, expectantly awaiting their turn to hear what so fascinated the others. The news, however, never reached either of their ears.

Before the New Yorkers knew what had happened, everyone had gotten up, run out to the automobiles they kept parked in front of the old railway car and roared off, one after the other, each in his own vehicle, for parts unknown.

Once alone, White and Allen looked at each other quizzically, not sure of what to do next. Since they had not been officially dismissed and had previously been given to understand that the meeting was of vital importance, they decided the best policy would be to await Concello's return.

After about an hour, during which time much of the cigar smoke, if not the mystery, had cleared, Concello and the others came back in a state of great, good humor. They sat down and without a word as to where they had been, the meeting continued, albeit in a startlingly altered mood. White later learned that Concello and company had gone off to observe an impromptu late afternoon orgy in the roustabouts' quarters.

A similar event, on a slightly elevated social level, once took place in Barbette's room. Anderson, as always, got wind of it, and the next day, to everyone's delight, broadcast the details for all to hear before rehearsals could get started. The performers, perhaps by virtue of their acrobatic prowess, were apparently far more flamboyant than the staff when it came to satisfying the urges of the libido.

Among those characters of whom White was particularly fond was Albert "Flo" White a clown who performed in drag. He was a charming man whose one social liability was his set of loose dentures. He tended, as a result, to spray any listeners who got too close to what he was saying. Fortunately his extravagant lateral lisp had no effect whatsoever on his clowning.

Flo lived, during the winter season, in a trailer park owned by the Canestrelli family, one of the great circus dynasties. His trailer was decorated in a style that might have been found in the boudoir of a high class courtesan of the 1920s. It had satin and lace everywhere: on the curtains, the throw pillows, on the lamp shades and on a collection of delicate dolls he displayed.

Once in drag, Flo took his female impersonation very seriously, which, along with his sense of style, made him all the more funny.

"I was very fond of Flo," White says, "and since he loved fussing over his costumes I always put him in spectacular outfits for the various production numbers. He adored them which, of course, pleased me a great deal. One season I decided to put him on the payoff float, a position normally reserved for the most stunning showgirl in the company. Con-



Ernie Burch in a Miles White costume

cello was skeptical, but went along with it. I suppose he was waiting to see just how far I would go. Flo was ecstatic and kept me out of trouble by carrying the part off like the grand diva he knew in his heart he was."

Ernie Burch, another drag clown whose trademark was the most extravagant set of false eyelashes in the business, was also a pal and one of the people whose spec costumes were always given extra thought. Burch's dying black swan was a comic highlight of the 1950 spec.

Speaking of showgirls, one of the most gorgeous was a girl Anderson had dubbed Hamburger Mary. In the circus she was always prominently featured on one of the most important floats and wore the most spectacular costumes. She was recruited from Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe where she reigned as one of Billy's Long Stemmed Beauties. As such, her company had been much sought after by some of the richest men in New York. But when she came to the circus she fell in love with a clown named Duffy.

Out of makeup Duffy was quite a good looking chap. The single tooth missing from the center of his smile only made him more appealing. This minor imperfection did not stand in the way of true love. While the circus was in winter quarters Hamburger Mary decided Duffy was irresistible. Once on the road, however, and under canvas, their romance cooled considerably.

While touring the circus provided each and every performer with just two buckets of water delivered daily to his dressing area. One was usually used for drinking. The second bucket was used for bathing or the laundry. If one wished to

have both a clean body and fresh clothes another bucket of water would be required. That one cost a nickel.

Duffy was something of a silent drinker. He tended to prefer the solace of a cheap bottle of wine to the balms of a bath, a preference that soon rendered him particularly pungent. Hamburger Mary discovered it was one thing to be democratic in one's choice of lovers, but quite another to get cozy with a less than fastidious clown. The romance ended just a few buckets short of a week on the road.

The Canestrelli family which ran Sarasota's most popular trailer park was dominated, like the bareback riding Cristiani family, by a formidable matriarch. Both women were renown for their cooking, so it was only natural that when Mrs. Canestrelli opened a restaurant in Sarasota Mrs. Cristiani was her most frequent visitor. Despite their circus background the two women dressed in the somber tradition of the Italian duenna, entirely in black. Thus they sat, casting their forbidding presence over the entire restaurant.

"Hardly anyone but me ever took much notice of their omnipresent and withering stare," White explains, "but I was sure that Mama Canestrelli, in particular, was giving me the evil eye." Perhaps she was suspicious of his penchant for casting her son Freddy in one of the more prominent positions in the production numbers, on a float.

"I had good reason to feature him," White insists. "For one thing, Freddy was very good looking. For another, unlike some of the other performers who rather resented having to appear in the production numbers and tended to sulk to show their disdain for them, Freddy was a smiler."

Some of White's other friends with the circus were Elsie Alzana, Jeannie Sleeter and Madame Josephine.

Along with her brother Harold, his wife and her sister, Elsie performed in the most exciting and popular high wire act of the time. Their performance featured one particular trick that involved Harold riding across the high wire while Elsie sat on his shoulders and the other two women hung from a pair of trapezes suspended from the bike's axles. The ride across the wire, from one platform to another, was normally executed at a painfully slow, labored pace to make it look as difficult and dramatic as possible. The circus band provided an accompaniment that sounded like a death march.



The Alzana family in 1949. Left to right, Papa Charles, Elsie, Hilda, Minnie and Harold.

Harold suffered from a trick knee and whenever it went out Elsie was obliged to substitute for him on the bicycle. One night during the show's stay at Madison Square Garden, Elsie arrived a bit late. She had been with White and Farrar at a cocktail party.

Elsie thus received the news of her brother's incapacitation, as luck would have it, in a state of advanced inebriation, rendering her higher than the wire upon which she was about to risk not only her own neck but those of her sister-in-law and sister as well.

At the fateful moment in the routine Elsie mounted the bicycle—and before she could lose her nerve—sped across the wire. It all happened so quickly the other women had barely had enough time to grab hold of their trapezes before they found themselves being snatched off their perches and flung into space. Over at the bandstand, Merle Evans, the bandleader, had played no more than the first bar of the usual musical accompaniment when he looked over at the high wire and found the trick already completed.

Jeannie Sleeter was a member of one of the flying trapeze troupes. She was very popular with everyone on the show. One season in winter quarters it occurred to White that Jeannie had never been formally introduced to most of the people with whom she had been keeping company. The designer determined to rectify that oversight when the circus played New York City.

"I gave her a coming-out party in my apartment and stood her by the door at the head of the receiving line where she was formerly introduced to and received each of the guests," he says. "Even John Murray Anderson showed up, paying Jeannie the ultimate accolade, since as a reformed alcoholic he always avoided such affairs. The evening was a great success, marred only temporarily by the Doll

family of midgets who were stuck in the elevator, unable to reach the button for the 9th floor."

One of the guests at Jeannie' reception was Josephine the side show snake charmer. Since the side show people did not ordinary socialize with the other performers, White's invitation turned Josephine into his eternal friend. Whenever he passed her platform in the basement of the Garden she would wave the head of one of her snakes at him by way of

greeting. That gave him the idea to cast her as Cleopatra and her snake as an asp in the Good Old Days spec.

In the early days of White's tenure with the circus Concello could afford to be tolerant of what he considered the designer's excesses. The show was making lots of money. All that changed rather quickly after the royalties from Cecil B. DeMille's film The Greatest Show on Earth began to run out. Then, after years of unbridled extravagance, Johnny North found it necessary to begin cutting down on production costs, although he never lost his taste for circus flamboyance.

Despite the new emphasis on economy the circus producer wanted to dress the clowns from head to toe in solid sequins like the elegant French buffoons for the finale of the 1955 show.

"I suggested going to Paris," White recalls, "and having the sequin work done there, and since I didn't speak much French, it seemed logical to have Johnny's old friend Max Weldy supervise the job."

Weldy had introduced Johnny to numerous French actresses over the years, one of whom, Germaine Aussie, became his wife. So Johnny readily agreed to the idea. To save on import taxes, the costumes were brought to America unfinished in separate pieces or "flat." The embroidery had been completed and all that remained to be done, once they got to America, was to sew the pieces together. This was to be done in a workshop set up in a loft on Main Street in downtown Sarasota.

In addition to the embroidery work the feathers and millinery were all to be made in Paris that year. It didn't take White long to understand that Weldy was not always on his side when it came to having the work done to his specifications. To preserve the integrity of of his work, therefore, White started showing up for his meetings with the local craftsmen with a English-French dictionary, as well as Max Weldy, in tow.

Under Weldy's supervision, constructing the costumes certainly cost less than it ever had before, but the savings were achieved at a tremendous reduction in quality. Having Weldy around, it turned out, only made White's work more difficult. "I was forever fighting with him so that the costumes would turn out looking like what I had intended," he explains. "Eventually I brought the woman who had supervised the construction of my costumes in Hollywood down to Florida to run the Sarasota workshop. I knew, at least, she was on my side.

"In addition I began making the specifications overly elaborate, knowing full well that Weldy would try to make them as cheaply as possible, anyway. This new arrangement kept me in a perpetual state of agitation."

About the only consolation derived from the entire Max Weldy mess was that White went to Paris at the circus' expense. He sailed on the *Ile de France* with Johnny, his gorgeous mistress Gloria Drew, whom Anderson had dubbed Pork Chops, and the aptly named Harry Dube who was Johnny's partner in numerous business deals, all of a slightly dubious nature. Dube published the circus magazine and program. Through it he managed all sorts of commercial tie-ins.

As per his usual regimen, Johnny slept through the day and rose in time for dinner, which was usually spent in close confabulation with Dube. While at dinner, Johnny and Dube discussed business, and White amused the otherwise abandoned and forgotten Pork Chops until such time

White sketch for Gloria Graham's costume in the *Greatest Show on Earth* in 1951. Miles White collection.



as when Johnny decided to take her off to bed.

Although this was her third trip to Paris, the only thing poor Pork Chops ever saw of it was an endless string of smokey night clubs. Exhausted from being up all night, she slept through the day. Even when they motored from city to city in Johnny's Mercedes limousine, Pork Chops and Johnny were fast asleep in the back of the car with the shades pulled down, shielding them not only from the sun, but from any possible sight seeing as well.

"It soon dawned on me," White says, "that there was a great deal of work to do in Paris, and without an assistant, I would never get it done. I sent for Peaceful Allen in short order, and when he arrived, I took him over to see Johnny at the Ritz Hotel, where he was staying. Johnny was, as I had expected, delighted to see Peaceful, but he soon dashed any hopes I harbored of having Peaceful's Paris stay paid for by the circus."

"Why, Peaceful," Johnny exclaimed when he found the designer's assistant in Paris. "What a lucky man you are to have such a rich friend as Miles White."

"That was when, much to my chagrin," White decided, "I knew for certain that Johnny considered all debts paid. That little favor, back in 1949, covering for me was the end to his generosity."

But before such problems began to cast a pall over their relationship, North was far more than White's boss. He was the ringmaster who set the racey pace and the hilarious tone for the outrageously good times they both enjoyed as part of The Greatest Show on Earth.

Johnny North was a night person. If one could keep up with his pace and nocturnal habits he could be gloriously entertaining company. White was one of those people who had no trouble at all in keeping up.

North owned the John Ringling Hotel in downtown Sarasota, and it was his headquarters for both business and pleasure. When the hotel closed for the night, Johnny would open the bar in the M'Toto Room, and he and his pals would drink and play until dawn. The group usually consisted of Johnny, Miles White, Thomas Farrar, Rudy Bundy, whose band played in the hotel, and whichever girl was Johnny's present flame.

"Sometimes I would tend bar," White remembers. Often the group got up an impromptu band. "Johnny played the sax, Rudy the clarinet, and I would whack the hell out of the drums. Occasionally the racket we raised with our enthusiastic playing would keep the paying guests awake and complaints about what was re-

ferred to as 'godawful noise' would flood the front desk."

Besides his appetite for women, another of North's passions was food. His favorite dining spot in Sarasota was a place called the Plaza. One of its specialities, of which he was particularly fond, was stone crabs. White once concocted a sauce for the crabs which the circus impresario devoured in great quantities. Thereafter, whenever they ate together at the Plaza, North would insist the designer make his special sauce. He would have a waiter bring out all the ingredient, and White would whip up a bowl of dressing for the piles of stone crabs they would then consume.

Despite his flair for spending, North was never particularly generous to any of his numerous girl friends. He did, however, love to give parties and never missed an occasion to throw one.

He gave Pork Chops a birthday party aboard his private railroad car, the Jomar, which he kept parked on the grounds of the circus winter quarters. "I knew these festivities were sure to go on at least until dawn," White recalls, "but since I was scheduled to be in Miami the next day to serve as best man for my agent, Howard Hoyt, I planned on leaving the affair around midnight and then driving across the state."

Hoyt was marrying Betty Kean, one of the Kean sisters who often worked on Broadway and in clubs. The wedding was to be a very posh affair at the home of Mrs. R. J. Reynolds, the divorced wife of the tobacco magnate. Her estate was situated on a private island off Miami beach. The wedding guests were scheduled to

White sketch of costumes for the 1954 Dreamland spec. Miles White collection.





arrive the day before and were all being put up at the Fontainbleu Hotel, the most blatantly pretentious such establishment in the country. The guest list included people such as Sophie Tucker and Joe E. Lewis.

"Knowing full well that I would be in no state to drive to Miami after Pork Chops' party," White explains, "I decided to make the trip in one of the circus vans that Concello had put at my disposal and talked a friend into doing the driving. That way I would be able to sleep in the back during the long trip."

Since Concello did not trust the designer to drive a decent car like everyone else around winter quarters, he provided what he thought to be the perfect conveyance for an overly sophisticated New Yorker. It was an old, beat up panel truck that had once been used for hauling the horse meat which the circus fed to its lions and tigers. It had been cleaned up considerably, but the hooks on which the carcasses had once hung were still in place and tended to bang around a good deal as one drove. It apparently amused Concello to imagine the costume designer having to make do with such an odd vehicle, but White insists he enjoyed driving it around Sarasota. It did, however, make a somewhat strange means of conveyance to a fancy wedding, emblazoned as it was with the legend: Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows.

Just as he was about to board his rather bizarre limousine for the ride to Miami, Pork Chops handed White the bouquet of roses she had received from Johnny. He took the flowers, kissed her good night and crawled into the back of the truck. Thus ensconced he waved farewell to the remaining merry makers as he was carted off.

The big show band in Miles White costumes in the 1954 *Dreamland* spec.

White had had the foresight to havea couple of mattresses put on the floor in the back of the truck, and there, despite the constant clanging of the meat hooks clanging overhead, he slept.

His arrival at the Fontainbleu, early the next morning, caused even more of a sensation than his departure from Sarasota had the night before. Never before had anything like this vehicle ever dared encroach upon the hotel's prestigious circular drive, and yet here it was driving right up to the front door.

But if the vehicle seemed odd and out of place, its occupant was even more of a

Pat Warner, center, and two ballet girls in Miles White costumes in the 1952 Good Old Days spec.



shock to the carefully maintained dignity. In all its history few of the hotel's well heeled guests ever matched the disheveled state of Miles White as he crawled out of the back of the truck, squinting in the noon day sun. Fortunately he had thought to stop up the road a bit and freshen up so that, despite his unsteady condition and the dead roses, White insists, "I didn't think I looked too bad."

"Is this a check-in?" the door man asked as if there was nothing at all incongruous about a man holding a bunch of dead roses surrounding by expensive luggage, getting out of an old circus truck.

"Of course," the designer said, equally oblivious and dreadfully hung over.

Without another word the hotel's latest arrival was quickly ushered in, and the truck was whisked around back and out of sight.

Eventually, it was through Max Weldy that Miles White was eased out of the picture. "Since I was never really hired, I wasn't really fired either. No one bothered to tell me that Marcel Vertes had been asked to design the 1956 production of the circus."

Vertes was an old friend of Weldy's and could be counted upon to stay out of sight. In that way he could presumably be dealt with more easily than White had been. By that time Johnny was quite desperate about trying to save the show from bankruptcy, so he was ready to try anything that might save a little money.

Something of the same situation occurred in reverse for the 1957 season, when, White says, "I suddenly found myself being consulted by Barstow as if I'd never been away."

But by then it was clear that the party had already been over for some time. A job that had once been such a delight had become little more than an endless round of battles with Weldy who was now fully in charge of the wardrobe department. "It took a great deal more effort," White concludes. "but the costumes finally came out looking the way I had hoped they would".

When Miles White had his way, in that remarkable period from 1941 to 1957, The Greatest Show on Earth was a thing of pure enchantment. That was a time when adjectives like "gorgeous" and "exciting" didn't only apply to what the performers were doing, but described what they were wearing as well, and together—performers and costumes—created a visual impact that, for those lucky enough to have experienced it, will always be unforgettable.

Circus Life and Adventue of Addition Bairaly

A Connecticut magazine recently wrote this about Adam Bardy's book:

"If you're still a kid at heart when the circus comes to town, you'll love Adam Bardy's life story of his adventures of circus life. Adam Bardy was born in Webster on May 21,1907. Back in 1907 thousands of immigrants from Europe kept coming to America.

"Bardy's life might be compared somewhat to Mark Twain's boyhood heroes Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and back in 1907 in June, Mark Twain met George Bernard Shaw in London. It was a rainy Saturday when the Buffalo Bill Circus came to Webster. Adam Bardy was only 8 years old when he crawled into a circus wagon that night. However on Sunday morning when he crawled out of his hiding place, he wanted to get back home. Bardy had to have a guardian angel as he got back home before he was missed.

"In 1924 Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus played in Worcester. Bardy's interest in the circus was renewed and he got a job with the side show. The circus liked getting young men to join them because it was out of young people that real circus troupers were made.

"Bardy found that circus life in the roaring twenties was rough and tough. On sunny days it was wonderful, but on rainy days you went to bed in the circus cars with wet clothes, and you would have to wait for a sunny day to dry out. If you could put in a full circus season under these conditions, you would be called a real trouper. In the twenties Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey was a railroad circus. It traveled in four sections. The first section was the cookhouse crew along with some circus wagons that carried the cookhouse. The second section carried most of the circus wagons and the stock cars full of work horses and nearly all the working crew. The third section carried the wild animal cages. There were 43 elephants with the circus.

Ex-Circus Man, Ex-Pugalist, N Ex-Still Operator, Bootlegger, Fortune Teller, And Author.

"One of our heroes was Tom Mix and on Saturday afternoon when the local movie theater featured westerns. Tom Mix and his wonder horse Tony was a favorite of young and old movie fans. We recall that Tom Mix was with the Sells Floto Circus and we were invited to attend the circus and see Mix in person in Willimantic. Adam Bardy was working with the Sells-Floto Circus at the time and knew Mix very well. There were more circuses in business in the twenties than there are now. Hagenback and Wallace, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, Sparks and Walter L. Main were some of the big ones

"Few folks realized that Tom Mix was at one time a real sheriff, a Deputy U.S. Marshall, a Texas Ranger, a real cow puncher and ranch foreman. He was even Roughrider under Teddy Roosevelt. For Bardy to personally know and work with Mix was one of the truly great thrills of his wonderful life. Mix was one of the truly greats of the silent moves.

"Adam Bardy at the age of 86 can look back at his many adventurous experiences in the circus, life with Gypsies, fortune telling, bootlegging, marriages, and finding love and happiness.

"He has written a book *The Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy*. This book would have made a wonderful movie with enough wholesome family desires of an eight year old "running away" for a day; joining the circus and becoming a boss canvasman and having his crew set up the big circus tent while still a teen-ager. Fortune telling, boxing, bootlegging, and after four score years becoming a successful author. With the right promotional agency, the life and adventures of Adam Bardy could be made into a television series that might parallel the Untouchables and Little House on the Prairie. Many men desire the anonymity of Mister X but Adam Bardy is a real Mr. X . . . Ex-Circus Man, Ex-Pugilist, Ex-Still Operator, Ex-Bootlegger, Ex-Fortune Teller, and an excellent author."

The book includes many pictures that tell the life story of Adam. For an autographed copy of Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy, send check or money order for \$12.95 to:

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

To all our old and new FRIENDS



ook & Whitby's Colossal English Shows, Museum and Menagerie Allied with America's Racing Association in 1893 proclaimed itself "The Foremost Show of All This World." The season began April 22, in the home town of Ben Wallace, Peru, Indiana, and following exhibitions in Indiana, Illinois and Missouri arrived in Oswego, Kansas on May 10.

Wallace was hiding behind the name of Cook & Whitby for the second year, having fouled the Wallace name in 1891 with gambling and a no-

torious disregard for laws and lawmen during a tour of Kansas which resulted in the arrest of the entire Wallace aggregation by the Kansas National Guard. Gambling continued in 1892 under the title of Cook & Whitby and also in 1893, but never as ruthlessly as in 1891 under the title of Wallace & Company.

An advertisement in the Oswego *Independent* on April 28, announced that, "The Foremost Show of All This World in all its Regal Splendor" would positively

exhibit at Oswego on May 10.

Under a cut of two standing Roman riders racing around the hippodrome the ad proclaimed: "50 Cages of Rare and Valuable Animals! A Herd of Elephants! A Drove of Camels! 100 Acts-20 Aerial Artists! 50 Acrobats and Gymnasts, 30 Hurricane Riders, 3 Grand Military Bands, A Regiment of Clowns! Finest Horses of Any Show on Earth. Enough Trained Animals to Equip A Big Menagerie. IN OUR THREE RINGS! Two Elevated Stages, And Half Mile Hippodrome Track!

"An Exhibition in Sublimity and Grandeur, never to be forgotten. Thrilling and

historically accurate reproductions of Chariot and Gladitorial Contests and Olympian Games that delighted the world of Ceaser.

'The English Derby Races, Jockey Races, Hurdle Races, 5-Horse Tandem Races, Flat Races, Elephant and Camel Races, Wheel-barrow, Bag and Clown Races.

'The Finest and most expensively costumed Hippodramatic Spectacle ever witnessed in which our magnificent collection of Thoroughbreds are spurred to their most impetuous efforts. Our FREE EXHIBITIONS make a Big Show of themselves. Master Wm. H. Hanner and his sister, Louise, will make the most sensational and terrific double

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING Chaste, Moral, Refined, Elegant Pleasing, Envertaining Dazzling and Truthful Vol. 1, Chapter One, Part One, 1893 By Orin Copple King

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balloon ascension and parachute jump ever attempted.

"DON'T MISS THE PARADE!

"More Bands, more Silver and Gold Wagons, Silk and Satin accoutered Animals, Magnificent Costumes, more open Dens, more Clowns than you will ever get a chance to see at one time again, as long as you live. A solid hour of delight and instruction FREE TO ALL.

"Excursion Rates on all Railroads en-

tering Oswego May 10th."

The only handout used in the *Independent* concerned the band of 33 pieces directed by Prof. Wm. Goetze. Comprised of five clarionets, two flutes, two piccolos, one sololetto, two saxophones, two French hornes, two bassoons, two oboes, five cornets, two altos, two baritones, two tubas, one double bass, snare and bass drum and bell player, the band was praised in nearly every town played. The

Illustration from an 1893 Cook & Whitby herald. Pfening Archives.



handout stated that Gilmore's famous band was the only one in America that could play the Cook & Whitby program.

The Oswego Independent had nothing to say of the performance after the show had come and gone, but expressed strong opinions concerning the gambling: "The Fool and His Money, Etc.

"The unwary farmer and guiless youth of the land and some of the city who, ordinarily, are wary and guilful, were taken in by the shell and dice games and the ball-

in-the-slot machine at the circus, Wednesday. It didn't make any difference on which one they bet, they all had the same result--lost. Most of the victims, however, fixed on the shell game. In this the victim guesses under which one of the three English walnut shells a little black ball lurks. He guesses, places his money on the 'lay-out,' raises the shell under which the little black ball glides and--it is not there. If he had raised all three of the shells at once, the nimble and elusive ball would not be found under any of them. The side show, where these games were worked, was crowded constantly with victims and circus men-one victim to two circus men-'cappers.'

"The guardians of the city's peace--men supposed to be elected and appointed for the purpose of enforcing the laws--were on the grounds while those games were being operated and were notified that the law was being violated within ten yards of where they then stood, but they carefully avoided going behind the scenes' at that time or at any time while the games were going on. If the gambling had been

stopped in the morning, when the officers were notified, residents of this vicinity would have been ahead several hun-

dred dollars today.

"It is the city's duty to protect all strangers and home people within her gates from the snares of the shoestring and sure-thing gambler or any other class of pilferers, but the only protection that was given Wednesday was to the gamblers and the 'home-talent' standing in with them.

"The good people of the city do not countenance any such

protection."

The gamblers apparently had the day off when the show exhibited at Fredonia on Thursday, May 11. The Alliance Herald reported that, "None of the

numerous devices for swindling the unsuspecting public were seen on the grounds and taken all in all it was a clean and creditable show." In spite of the threatening weather the show was well patronized.

'The exhibit and performance throughout was first class, and everybody seemed pleased. The races were exciting and gen-

uine trials of speed."

Willis Cobb, press agent, "showed himself to be a capable and agreeable gentleman, and will be pleasantly remembered for especial courtesies to press representatives. THE HERALD wishes that he may live long and prosper."

Cobb paid the advertising bill.

The Cook & Whitby press department was fond of sprinkling short statements throughout the news columns of the local papers, like those below from the Augusta Gazette of April 28: "A most thrilling and sensational double balloon ascension is made daily from Cook & Whitby's exhibition grounds, the novel spectacle of a horse going skyward being a feature.

"Fifty beautiful lady artists, whose grace, agility and beauty are wonderful to behold.

"Read the announcement of Cook & Whitby's English Circus. This is the most celebrated show of Europe.

"The Albany Enquirer states that a visit to Cook & Whitby's Circus and Menagerie bestows a liberal education on the visitor.

"Cook & Whitby's Colossal English shows have created a furor in the east. Our exchanges all concur in the statement that this is the most extensive and entertaining circus ever brought to this country.

"It took all the available space in the monster steamship 'Titanic' to accommodate Cook & Whitby's immense circus organization. This is probably the largest show in the world.

"Cook & Whitby have brought their entire circus and menagerie to this country, and reproduce their performance as in the Palace Garden London.

"The numerous free exhibitions given by Cook & Whitby are a whole show in themselves."

Additional paragraphs like the following were added at other towns: "A crowd of horsemen, attending the Cook & Whitby's circus at Louisville recently, declared the English Derby races, the most exciting they ever saw, being absolutely true to life—something never attempted before under canvas.

'The lovers of the perfect horse should not fail to see Cook & Whitby's superb collection.

"In Cook & Whitby's Menagerie are twenty-seven lions alone, ranging from cubs a month old to the full grown animal.

"Cook & Whitby's 3-ring circus will be in the United States this year. This show is the foremost show of all this world.

"Cook & Whitby's circus parade is nearly a mile long—a succession of blooded horses, open dens and tableaux, blazing with silver and gold—the sight of a lifetime.

"An astounding conjunction of startling sensations! Original features! Classically beautiful performances! Cook & Whitby's Circus!"

All of the above paragraphs were also used during the season of 1892, as were nearly all the handouts used by the press in 1893.

Cook & Whitby 1893 newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

A short handout used in nearly every paper stated that, "Extraordinary Added Attraction. The latest and greatest of all wonders a troupe of performing monkeys are now presented to the public for the first time by Cook & Whitby, with the assurance that earth cannot produce their equal. They are a study for the naturalist, a theme of thought for the philosopher, a source of pleasure for the people, a wonder for the children, a subject of surprise for everybody-they do all that man can do."

Monkeys or chimpanzees?

Longer handouts were always credited to eastern papers such as the Albany Enquirer, Cleveland Journal and Pittsburgh Press, sometimes with an "h," sometimes without. In 1893 the show played neither Albany, Cleveland or Pittsburgh. The most used handout is the following: "THE COMING CIRCUS.

'The Cook & Whitby English Circus and Menagerie which exhibited here yesterday was a revelation to our people, of the possibilities of a genuine Old World Circus, and makes our well known and hackneyed shows seem very shabby and poor indeed to comparison. High class equestrian and athletic exhibitions in the

three rings and the two elevated stages, new and never dreamed of by our American showmen, followed each other in bewildering succession, amazing and confounding the immense audience, while the numerous clown acts interspersed would throw them into convulsions of laughter and merriment. We cannot praise Cook & Whitby too highly; their parade, nearly a mile in length, was a succession of open dens, band wagons and blooded horses, all blazing in gold, silver and silk, their menagerie the most ex-

tensive one viewed, their circus and hippodrome performance immeasurably superior to any we know, or have ever witnessed. The baloon (sic) ascensions were successfully complished, while various free exhibitions during the day would more than equal the entire stock in trade of ninety-nine per cent of the shows that ever visited Cleveland. We heartily wish them success in their American tour, they so highly merit, and are glad to have made the personal acquaintenance of the managers, in that we have never met more courteous and obliging gentlemen.--Cleveland Journal."

The Gazette was impressed with the parade. There had been doubts as to the quality of the show, unknown in Augusta. "But when the parade was made all doubt as to the high order of the show were

dispelled. The beautiful horses, the elephants, the camels, the gilded dens and wagons containing wild beasts from every land, accompanied by four bands, prepared the people to expect a fine show and when they got inside the canvas they were not disappointed.

"The hundred performers, and every one an artist, gave the people one of the best shows that ever appeared in Augusta."

Every paper had praise for the magnificent horses, but stronger praise for the press agent, Willis Cobb.

"Mr. Willis Cobb, the press manager," according to the *Gazette*, "is one of the most courteous gentlemen that ever traveled with a circus. It has been usual for



the newspaper man to have to hunt up the treasurer of the traveling show when he wanted to present his advertising bill, but such was not case this time. The office had scarcely opened before Mr. Cobb made his appearance and paid his bill."

made his appearance and paid his bill."

The Larned *Tiller and Toiler* noted the presence of Cook & Whithy's second bill car on May 8.

The gamblers were out in full force for the Larned exhibitions of May 15, and the *Tiller and Toiler* reported that, "The usual number of suckers who have been taken in on the skin business at the show are now silently damning their luck and lack

of horse sense. No one has the least bit of sympathy for a fellow who loses his money on another fellows game. One of the Larned fellows who lost in the neighborhood of twenty dollars at the skin business Monday declared a few days ago he would like to have the weekly TILLER and TOILER, but could not spare the dollar. The worst skin game ever struck Larned accompanied the show Monday, and it caught suckers here for several hundred dollars. One of the fellows and a fellow from home here who allowed himself to be used as a capper were arrested and fined, amounting to about \$60. Instead of there being a

letting up in this robbery business it seems to grow. The proper mode of suppressing has not been put in force. When special police are appointed they should be instructed to arrest such concerns when they make the very first offer, not after they have skinned a number of victims."

The paper had a good word for Willis Cobb. "A genial wholesale press agent Mr. Willis Cobb, with Cook & Whitby, takes the cake. He has the good will of the press from Maine to California. The first ones paid when his show strikes town are the newspapers. His little grip is known far and near. And the beauty of it is you never find him with a snide or bum outfit."

The Barton County Democrat, following the exhibitions in Great Bend on May 16, remarked that the horses were "the finest collection of equines ever seen in this city."

"Promptness, courteousness and a studied effort to please the general public," the *Democrat* continued, "is the secret of success of the Cook & Whitby show, and these valuable traits are all admirably represented in Mr. Willis Cobb, the press representative of the show."

The Great Bend Barton Beacon agreed with the Democrat's evaluation of the horses stating that, "The Cook & Whitby

parade Tuesday contained the most beautiful teams that have been with any circus."

The *Beacon* reported a feature of the show that the *Democrat* missed: "It is reported that there were some of the slickest gambling devices with the show here this week that was ever seen through this county. A large number of our men spent from \$20 to \$140, to learn the new tricks. They know now just how it was done."

McPherson had a dilemma that would delight any circus fan. Ringling Brothers May 16, and Cook & Whitby on the 18th. The only rational solution would be to at-

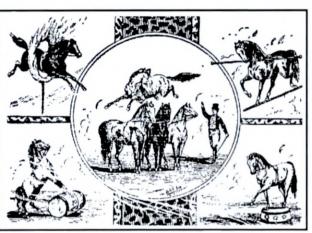


Illustration from the 1893 Cook & Whitby herald. Pfening Archives.

tend both shows, which is what the people of McPherson did. The McPherson Democrat reported that Ringlings exhibited to "the largest crowd ever attending a circus in the city." Cook & Whitby "drew a good crowd and gave one of the best performances ever seen in the city. The show was all that was advertised and was entirely free from fakirs and swindlers." Even a gambler deserves a day off.

"The press agents with the circuses this week, W. B. Raymond with Ringling Bros. and Willis Cobb with Cook & Whitby, are veterans at the business and lose no opportunity to make it pleasant for the newspaper fraternity."

The Marion *Record* was at odds with the majority of Kansas newspapers when it reported the exhibitions in Marion on May 19, as being "rather thin, aside from the Japanese acts and trapeze performances, the menagerie thinner and the concert the thinnest. The balloon was good, but the side show was a fake. Taking it all together Cook & Whitby's Monster Circus and Menagerie is a second class humbug."

Between 3,500 and 4,000 people attended the matinee.

There was no gambling on show day in Marion. Mayor Dan S. Lindsay was one of

the few people who understood the connection between the gamblers and the circus management. Lindsay refused to license anything but the show itself. "He notified the managers of the show," according to the *Record*, "that if any games of chance or other humbugs were opened up, he would hold the show itself responsible for it and arrest the whole out-fit."

While at Marion the show received by express a box of snakes.

The Abilene Weekly Chronicle, speaking of the exhibitions of Saturday, May 20, reported "There wasn't a wheel of fortune

on the circus grounds Saturday." In another paragraph the *Chronicle* stated that "many of those in attendance had money to throw to the birds, through skin games of chance."

The report of gambling at Abilene was picked up by the Seneca Courier-Democrat on June 2 which related that, "Cook & Whitby's circus showed at Abilene last week, and the people who attended were flecced out of \$1,000 by sharks and gamblers following the show. We hope the people will look out for them here and that our city fathers will keep an eagle eye on the outfit."

It was a needless worry, for Cook & Whitby did not exhibit in Seneca.

Sometimes one gets the feeling that an occasional handout was written in the press agent's favorite tavern just before closing time, or perhaps the writer had funny tobacco in his favorite pipe. One such titled "The Grand Free Street Parade," was used frequently when the press department wished to avoid "the slightest tinge of exaggeration." The Concordia Alliant ran the following story ahead of the exhibitions of May 22: "The pageantry of an ancient Rome and the displays of modern times are actually surpassed by the grand free street parade of the Cook & Whitby show. It is a difficult task to attempt a description of this splendid portion of the Cook & Whitby show, especially in a cooly written publication such as this is intended to be. It has been the purpose of the writer to avoid the slightest tinge of exaggeration in all of the statements made in this, and thus it is that a description of this parade is difficult, because a truthful enumeration of its almost innumerable attractions would seem exaggerated, so much greater and grander than the attractions of usual parades are they; therefore the reader must be contented now with the plain mention of only a portion of the features of the grand free street parade, and see for themselves the rest. There are herds of elephants and droves of camels-towing beautiful tab-

leaux. There are twelve superb tableaux cars, resplendent in purple and gold, scarlet and silver. These magnificent structures on wheels represent important events in the history of the world. Beauteous ladies and handsome gentlemen, costumed in gorgeous attire of olden days recline beneath silver panoplies, or stand in armors of steel and silver as heroes of medieval times. There are six open dens of wild beasts, each containing the human

master of each den, and showing how, even in the excitement of the throng, man can control the fiercest of the brute creation. There is a congress of nations, grouped upon mammoth floats, and representing correctly in color and dress every race and nationality of people on the globe. There are cavalcades of knights and ladies en route to the tournament, there are groups of mas-queraders and harlequins and clowns; there are bands of plantation jubilee singers, filling the air with their pathetic ballads, weird hymns and mirthful shouts. There are five bands of music, which make the very atmosphere throb with the richest harmonies; there are bagpipers, Irish pipes, Tyrolese warblers and musicians of all countries. There are hundreds of other features which cannot be enumerated here and above all the floating flags of all nations. The glittering gold, the

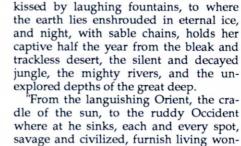
glistering of gems, the shim-mering of silks and satins, the kladeidoscope of color, all charm the eye; the blare of the bands, the crash of the drums, the songs of the singers, the joyous shouts of the darkies, the plaudits of the populace, entrance the ear-and all go to make up a grand holiday wherever the Cook & Whitby show appears."

Concordia on a thoroughly wet and windy, miserable day did not see the parade or the show in its full glittering glory. According to The Alliant: 'The Cook & Whitby circus was here on Monday, striking a poor day. A driving cold rain made the procession have a chilly appearance. The prancing steeds wouldn't prance in the mud; the rich costumes were laid aside for gum coats and slickers. The storm made it impossible for the balloon act. The company gave a very creditable performance in the afternoon, none in the evening. Their performance was firstclass, and among their horses were some very fine specimens of the English thoroughbred. The wind tore great rents in their tent and made good performing almost impossible. The old veteran Willis Cook Cobb is their press agent and is as

courteous to the poor devil of a country weekly as to the big gun of the city daily.'

The Concordia Daylight thought that, "The show probably left more money in town than they took out."

Thanks to Mayor Jack and Marshal Bush of Minneapolis, "there was an absolute absence of the usual swindling games and devices that have made show days black days of lamentation," according to the Minneapolis Messenger



ders for our great school. "This grand Colossal World's Fair Exposition will positively exhibit at Salina next Wednesday."

After show day, the Sun gave a glimpse of the performance: "The Japanese juggling was fine, the tumbling superior and the riding grand. The crowning act was the aerial trapeze and we have never seen its equal. It was most artistically done, but almost took one's breath at the venturesome act. Full thirty feet the young lady jumps from the top of the tent and is caught with the grasp of the hands of her male attendant below as he hangs from a swing. She also swings fifty feet and turning a somersault is caught by his ready grasp. For full two hours and a half did this exhibition go on. Even the concert was fair and the side show excellent."

May 25 was a poor day for almost anything in Manhattan, especially for a circus. The Mercury

published the story on the 31st. "Cook & Whitby's circus labored under difficulties here last Thursday. Coming from Salina via McFarland over the Rock Island, made them late in arriving. There was trouble with the city authorities over the selection of a place to show delaying them still more and it was not till after one o'clock that the parade was made. The prospects of a stormy day kept hundreds of people away who would have been here, yet there was a large crowd in town and the big tent was well filled when the show began. Before the show was over the rain and heavy hail storm came on, the hail going through the canvas and causing a stampede and nearly everybody got a soaking. No attempt was made to show at night. Those who saw the performance speak highly of it. They certainly have fine stock, their horses being exceptionally good. Everything looked new and bright and though not large was excellent. Willis Cobb, the gentlemanly press agent is known wherever circuses go and has a warm place in the hearts of the newspaper fraternity, because of the many courtesies he has shown them.'



AN ENCHANTING AVIARY HE BRICHT PLUMACED BIRDS OF TROPIC LANDS.

BIRDS OF PARADISE

THE CREAT FLAMINGO

A HUNDRED BIRDS THAT TALK Brilliant Hued, Rare and Curious, of every size and shape, of strangest habits.

Blesboks, • Hartbeests And the Fleetest Antelopes of Darkest Africa.

TERRORS FROM INDIAN JUNGLES

From the Frozen North

Comes Great Polar Bears, Huge Sea Llons, Seals and Fur Animals.

MONKEYS IN MISCHIEVOUS MELEE

Forest, Mountain, Prairie and Pampas ambers. Wolves, Hyenas.

A portion of an 1893 Cook & Whitby herald. Pfening Archives.

when Cook & Whitby played that town on May 23.

The horses were all magnificent animals, in splendid condition and the races were the best and most exciting that have ever been given in this city. The only accident to mar the entire performance occurred during those races in the afternoon when a little boy who was riding a pair of Shetland ponies, fell and was slightly hurt though not so serious as to prevent his appearance in the evening performance."

Salina saw Cook & Whitby on Wednesday, May 24, nine days after the Ringling show. A handout in the Salina Sun on the 20th was another example of high class rapture by a brown-eyed press agent who could put Bulwer-Lytton to shame.

The enormous amount expended yearly in all quarters of the globe by the Cook & Whitby European-American Allied Shows which will exhibit at Salina, Wednesday next, is without parallel.

"From where the stately palm tree uprears its glorious head, to where the blazing tropical sun and the golden sands are In another column the *Mercury* reported that, "There were more tramps, bums, toughs, fakirs, confidence men and gamblers in town, Thursday, than ever before at one time. They followed the circus and had they shown across the Blue [River], outside police protection, these fellows would have gotten in their work. As it was they were watched and but few suckers bit. One man was cheated out of thirty dollars by a ticket seller in making change, but he is the only one that reported."

The Topeka Daily Democrat on May 8 reported that, "W. F. Parmlee, agent of Cook & Whitby's circus, is in town. The great aggregation will show in this city on the 26th instant." The highly decorated advertising car was parked on the Rock Island tracks at Second street and Kansas avenue. Advertising car No. 2, with a crew of eleven, rebilled Topeka on the 19th.

"Early this morning," according to the Topeka *State Journal*, "a man wearing a green flannel shirt and carrying a big bunch of balloons began patrolling Kansas avenue. Then the youngsters knew for sure that the circus had come.

'The Cook and Whitby train of twenty-five cars came in at 11:30 o'clock last night from Manhattan. On account of the heavy rain at that place no performance was given. Before daylight this morning the animals and wagons were taken to the show grounds on South Topeka avenue.

"A rather heavy wind accompanied the rain at Manhattan, but did no damage to the tent or equipments as reported."

A staff member of the circus, Mr. Fuller, received a shock when the city clerk informed him that a license for the exhibitions would cost \$160. Fuller asked Mayor Jones if the license could not be reduced, but the City Attorney said that the mayor was given no discretionary power in the ordinance. Mayor Jones said that he would like to accommodate the circus if he could.

Concluding the story, the *Journal* recounted that, "Mr. Fuller thought \$160 was too much for a rainy day and thought there should be a license on a sliding scale, one adjustable for the weather. He said that the average city license did not exceed \$40. He finally took a roll of bills the size of both fists out of his pocket and paid the license."

The show grounds at Fifteenth Street and Topeka Avenue was the same lot where the mud nearly swallowed Cook & Whitby in 1892.

After the show had come and gone the Topeka *Daily Capital* ran the following account: "THE FIRST CIRCUS. It Takes

More Than Mud to Stop the Modern Performance.

'Topeka is not so large yet but the coming of a circus is an important event to most of the citizens. Especially does the first show of the season always attract attention.

"Any one who was on the avenue yesterday when the parade went past could not help noticing this. As the music of the first band was wafted across Fourth street it reached the ears of the men assembled in the two county court rooms and it was not long before the occupants were where

formance, appearing in every other act, but few were disappointed in this for they gave something new every time and their balancing and acrobatic specialties were excellent. The flying trapeze and high trapeze work, the stage acrobats, the bicyclers and the tight rope bouncers all gave very enjoyable performances.

'The muddy condition of the rings prevented any very fine exhibitions of fancy riding. The outside track where the races took place was also very muddy but did not spoil this feature. The races were genuine contests, as anyone could see from

the fearless way in which the riders and drivers whipped their steeds around the slippery corners. The chariot race was a splendid one; the mud flew terribly but the drivers did not mind it a bit. The contestants came in neck and neck and 'the man' only won by a nose. One jockey was thrown headlong in the mud by his horse when it slipped down. The horses carried by the show are exceptionally fine throughout and were greatly admired. The handsome costumes of all the performers was a pleasing change from the gaudy trappings mostly seen. In the afternoon the tent was barely half filled but last evening there was a much better attendance, nearly all the seats being full.

"The greatest drawback to the performance was the very tiresome scene where the clown advertises the business houses in the city who pay so much apiece to have their names mention in a very stupid dialogue."

The Journal confirmed the quality of the horses. The horses carried by Cook & Whitby are the best carried by any circus of its class. Their racing animals show mettle and are evidently of high breeding, and their draft horses are

strong, well-built, and beautiful."

In speaking of the parade the *Journal* stated, "There were three good bands in the procession, a calliope at one end and the jovial Willis Cobb riding with Prof. Louis Heck at the other. Mr. Cobb and Prof. Heck are old friends."

Cobb and Heck both came to Topeka with Sells Brothers' Great European Circus in 1876, Cobb with trained dogs and Heck as bandmaster. In the early 1880's Heck left the show and settled in Topeka giving music lessons and providing orchestras for social events. He is buried in Mt. Calvary cemetery in Topeka.

Day and date with Cook & Whitby was the exhibition of an ossified man. The man was shown in a wagon parked on the street instead of the show ground. Topeka had an ordinance prohibiting any wagon standing on the street unless horses were hitched to it. The manager sought an empty store room but failed, because



This ad in German appeared in the May 4, 1893 Wichita *Herald*. Kansas State Historical Society.

they could get a full view of the gold wagons and the elephants. Both judges kindly announced short recesses and judges, jurors, clients and attorneys were soon on the sidewalks below or filling the windows in order to see the passing show.

"Cook & Whitby showed here yesterday under circumstances almost identical with those of their appearance in Topeka last spring; the only difference being that this time the mud under the big tent was not quite so many inches deep. The performance given yesterday was, on a whole, a very satisfactory one. It was not up to Barnum, of course, in spectacular features, but there are a number of special artists in the big company that are first class in their line. The Jap family was called upon for about half of the per-

of the high rent demanded. Topeka did not get to see the ossified man.

Cook & Whitby played Holton, Saturday, May 27, and in the aftermath the editor of the *Weekly Recorder* related some common truths.

'The newspapers may expose its dangers, and the preacher may descant on its immoralities and warn the people that it is on the direct road to perdition, yet there is something in human nature that is unable to resist the peculiar and in-

sidious attraction of the circus. Hard times may oppress and poverty stare, but there has as yet been no recorded instance in which when the family got the circus fever that some shift was not made whereby the necessary funds were secured to purchase the tickets. We do not charge that there is anything very wicked or wrong in all this. There is evidently something abnormal and out of gear in the boy or girl anywhere between the ages of three and thirty years who does not have an almost uncontrolable hankering to go to the circus. The older and more staid of this class may try to deceive themselves and others by saying it is

the animals that attract them, but it is a deception that deceives no one, and that no one believes. It is the show as a whole which constitutes the attraction, and in making this statement we intend to include all, from the elephant and clown down to the jewelry fakir and the man who sells rose colored water with a little acid added, advertised as lemonade. There have been stale jokes perpetrated at the expense of the men and women who attend under the pretense that they only go to take the children to see the animals. These so called jokes do injustice to many people. They do in many cases go to take the children, and after some years of experience and observation we most deliberately assert that the father or mother who can cooly and dispassionately disregard the longing of the children to go to the circus and deny them the gratification of this desire is either a hard hearted parent or conscientious beyond what we believe either religion or good morals demands."

The Recorder and the Holton Signal both commented on the gambling, but both failed to report a circus wedding. John Roberts, known in the profession as John Cleveland, married Jennie Alward, hurdle rider and dancing rope artist, according to the New York Clipper on June 10, 1893, "Wm. F. Goetz's Band was present and played a wedding march as the happy couple walked to the alter, with Mead Werntz and Mrs. Della Werntz as attendants. The church was

filled to its utmost capacity by members of the show and a large number of outsiders. After the show at night Mrs. Alward, mother of the bride served a big spread to all members of the show. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts took the train for Kansas City."

Following Holton the show moved on to Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, going as far west as Salt Lake City for exhibitions there on June 28 and 29.



Illustration from an 1893 Cook & Whitby newspaper ad. Kansas State Historical Society.

"The circus came in on Sunday morning and it was 'horse and horse' which had the largest crowds—the show or the churches." Cook & Whitby had jumped 197 miles on the Rock Island from Denver to Goodland for exhibitions on Monday, July 17.

The Goodland *News* provided some interesting information after the show had gone, including the price of admission.

"It was predicted that owing to the hard times there would be but few people attend. This was partly true as many who come to town did not go inside the tent, yet a good crowd paid 75 cents to go in. It was a very good entertainment. The street parade was above the usual run and quite a show in itself. The usual program was given in the tent; the trapeze acts and the racing being the features. The ossified man and a mind reader was a show unto themselves. There was also a side show with a nigger chief, a fire eater and other things among which a 'shell game' which was patronized. Quite a number of men lost sums of money ranging from \$5 to \$30, and no one feels sorry that they did, as a warning against such things was published and the people were told that they would lose if they bet on the games. A showman knoked (sic) Jas. Henry down for trying to keep Dennis Boldue from losing \$20, but Dennis lost it all the same, and Jim has swore off trying to keep people out of trouble who are determined to get in it.

"The management of the circus proper are gentlemen who tried to make their patrons comfortable. The press is grateful to Press Manager Willis Cobb, who had the best part of the seats roped off for the especial accommodation of the editors."

Cook & Whitby paid the town of Colby \$15 for a license to exhibit there on July 18. Nowhere in its advertising or hand-

outs did the show announce its intention of playing a matinee only, and hundreds who expected to attend the evening performance were disappointed. Before dark the aggregation was on its way to Scandia. The jump of about 190 miles required an early departure. About 3,000 people, according to the Colby *Tribune* attended the matinee. Both the *Tribune* and *Free Press* praised the exhibition, but the *Press* reported shock and disgust at the rampant gambling.

The Scandia *Journal* could not restrain itself from chiding its readers. "It is useless, now that the circus has come and gone, but

the JOURNAL desires to say that it warned its readers against the shell game. Lots of men with gray hair 'bucked the tiger' to their sorrow. Somehow their fellowmen don't feel deep sympathy for them."

In a separate paragraph the *Journal* remarked, "Any man who was taken by the circus gamblers has himself to blame."

The Osage City Free Press, concerning the exhibitions of Friday, July 21, made a brief comment regarding gambling but devoted most of its space to a rash of burglaries on circus day. Olof Nelson lost about \$40 dollars in money and also clothing and jewelry. J. M. Hiltebrand's home was entered through a window. The thieves carried off a pair of gold spectacles, a set of sleeve buttons, a collar button and numerous other valuable articles. Taken at Wm. Pepworth's home was \$45 cash, an English brooch, a gold Odd Fellows shirt stud, two razors, a revolver and "other valuables."

The July 27 Eskridge Star reported that, "Cook & Whitby's show train stood on the side tracks several hours Saturday morning July 22." A large number of the boysold ones as well as young ones—went over and looked at the animals. They had a fine collection. The most interesting thing about the whole affair was a short fight between two tigers. The ferocity of the animals could be appreciated better by seeing their short melee and those who saw the fun have more respect for the tigers prowess than ever before."

July 22 was circus day in Lawrence. The Weekly Journal reported that, "As early as 7 o'clock Saturday morning people began coming to Lawrence from the country. They came in all kinds of rigs and on the morning trains from surrounding towns. There were a great many children, but there were also lots of grown people ... By 9 o'clock many had taken places along the sidewalks from which to see the parade and no power on earth could move them till after it passed. . . . There were more in town than has been before this year. The crowd was a well dressed one and gave the appearance of a thrifty, prosperous satisfied people and who could have no fault to find with anything in this world as it is at present."

As for the performance, the *Journal* thought the show was "thoroughly satisfactory and was without question the finest in every way that Lawrence people have ever had an opportunity of witnessing."

The Lawrence police kept a tight lid on gambling, but out in the adjoining countryside burglars were working hard. Five houses were ransacked while the residents were at the circus. Marshal Asner offered a reward of twenty dollars for the capture of the thieves and the recovery of "One ladies gold watch, one gold thimble, one oxidized silver bracelet, one watch chain, one pair gold ear rings with white stone sets, one gold breast pin, about \$5 in coin; one gold ring with double heart set, and some other jewelry and clothing."

The Garnett *Eagle* after show day on July 25 noted that, 'The big attendance at the show last Tuesday did not indicate that the country is on the verge of material or financial ruin--at least not till after the show was over.

"We have not seen a larger crowd in the city for a long time than was here circus day. They came in carriages and buggies and wore fine clothes too, and brought lots of good things to eat for dinner.

"A good many fellows found out Tues-

day that they could not beat another fellow at his own game.

"One young man was short changed out of \$25 by a showman who wanted some large bills for smaller change."

As for the show, the *Eagle* reported that, "The horses and wagons were an attraction worth seeing in themselves to say nothing of the animals and performance. Every one of the big herd of horses was fat and sleek and showed to advantage. The band was one of the best that has ever been seen in the west."

The Eagle closed with a salute to Willis Cobb: "The newspaper fraternity of course were glad to greet their old friend Willis Cobb, the press agent, the most genial and clever agent ever seen with a show. Willis always sees that every newspaper man and their families as well as everybody else is rightly treated. A show is not complete without Willis Cobb. He is undoubtedly the most popular showman on the road."

Cook & Whitby played Ottawa on a day that began with a heavy rain and ended with showers, but the crowds still came to town. The *Republican* noted that, "Everybody said the parade was good and what everybody says is correct."

Another observation of the *Republican* was, "Showmen get about six to seven hours sleep and although the train arrived at 3 o'clock this morning [July 26], the sleepers were not called up until 5 a.m."

"Press agent Cobb of the great show, called this morning," the *Republican* reported. "Cobb has had the grip since he was here two years ago but he is the same genial handshaker he was 20 years ago. He believes in his show and makes you believe in it too. May he never grow gray."

Under the heading "Normal Notes" the Republican commented that, "It is our humble belief that the circus is preferable to Physiology and with all due respect to our teacher, Miss Dicklow, we will adjourn to the corner of First and Main."

The last stand of the Kansas tour, Olathe, on July 27 was reported by the *Herald* in terms echoed by nearly every Kansas editor.

"One and all of our citizens are loud in praise of the grand street parade that was

Menagerie bill used by Ringling Bros. in 1893. It was one of a series of lithographed by the Courier Co. Pfening Archives. given by Cook & Whitby's circus on last Thursday.

'The morning was dark and rainy, but by eight o'clock the clouds broke and the sun began to send forth its rays. Our country friends began to swarm into town from all directions and by eleven o'clock the streets were full. The parade started from the grounds at eleven o'clock and it was a revelation of wealth and splendor that fairly dazzled those who witnessed it. The horses were the finest ever shown in our city, the wagons were new, the costumes were bright and sparkling.

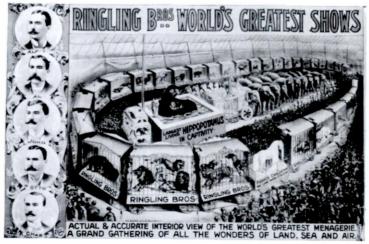
There were three bands and the requisite number of clowns in the parade. They gave two performances--afternoon and evening. In the afternoon the vast tent was crowded and the performances were the best we have seen in our city. Their numerous horse races are exciting, and the chariot racing is simply terrific. The trick donkeys were educated to an extent almost human. The exhibition of animals was good, having nearly all kinds of wild beasts that roam the earth.

"In the evening the attendance was small on account of the heavy rain.

"The managers and those connected with the circus were courteous gentlemen and demanded the respect of all who met them in any way."

The complete Kansas route for Cook & Whitby's Colossal English Circus, Museum and Menagerie, Allied with America's Racing Association, in 1893, was: May 10, Oswego*; May 11, Fredonia; May 12, Augusta; May 13, Wichita; May 15, Larned*; May 16, Great Bend*; May 17, Lyons; May 18, McPherson; May 19, Marion; May 20, Abilene*; May 22, Concordia; May 23, Minneapolis; May 24, Salina; May 25, Manhattan; May 26, Topeka; May 27, Holton*; July 17, Goodland*; July 18, Colby*; July 19, Scandia*; July 20, Clay Center; July 21, Osage City; July 22, Lawrence; July 24, Chanute*; July 25, Garnett*; July 26, Ottawa; July 27, Olathe. *Gambling reported.

> The first Kansas date for Ringling Bros.' World's Greatest Shows in 1893 was Mankato on May 11. The wellorganized Ringling corps opened the campaign April 20, with a five-column advertisement in the Jewell County Review, Mankato. A different ad of similar size appeared in the Review on the 27th, naming some of the featured acts. Si Hassan Ben Ali's Troupe of Arabs, "acrobats;" Charles W. Fish, "The World's Champion Somersault Rider," Reno Sisters, "Europe's Pre-



mier Equestriennes;" Brothers Vernon, "Absolute Kings of the Air;" Mikado's "Troupe of Royal Japanese."

Mankato was promised a "Spectacular Equine Carnival of 100 Fire-Bred Imported Horses In a Grand Ballet Militant, embracing Amazing Terpsichorean Divertissements, Colossal Living Pyramids and Picturesque Vivant." One wonders how the preceding was translated by the average Kansas farm boy.

There was also mentioned the "Grand Horse Fair, with its 350 Head of Blooded Stock," the crowning feature of which was "Prince Chaldean, Long-Maned Percheron Stallion." There was a "Monster Bi-Horned Gnu; Sacred Cattle, Mam-

moth Hippopotamus, Two Herds of Performing Elephants, and a Pair of Baby

Clown Elephants."

The "Real Roman Hippodrome," on a track a third of mile long, presented an exciting assortment of races. Jockey Races, Elephant and Camel Races, "Child-Delighting" Pony Races with Monkey Drivers, but the most spectacular was the Two and Four-Horse Chariot Races. There was a thrill to the chariot races, a frightening thrill to those in the first few rows, as a pair of four horse chariots thundered by side-by-side, showering the audience with dust and debris or clods of mud, depending on the day.

It was all offered at "the regular price, Children under 12 years half price."

The ads mentioned the parade "promptly at 10 o'clock on the morning of the exhibition. Ten kinds of music. Scores of sun-bright chariots. Hundreds of gaily-caparisoned horses. No postponement on account of the weather." Featured in the procession were the "Moscow Chiming Bells" and the "Golden Steam Calliope." Three handouts appearing in the *Review* repeated the claims of the advertisement. Mankato's other newspaper, the *Western Advocate* carried two advertisements and two handouts.

Following circus day the *Review* stated that, "Well, Ringling Bros great show has come and gone. The crowd that came into the show numbered from 10,000 to 12,000. It is generally conceded to have been the biggest gathering in north central Kansas"

The Advocate published the following: "One of the Ringling brothers stated on the evening of the show that from the number of tickets they had sold there were not less than 10,000 people in the tent. There were many who come to town to see the parade who did not enter the tents, and it is safe to say that not less than 12,000 people were on the streets of our little town at one time."

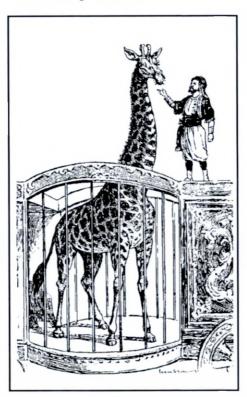


Charles W. Fish, featured rider on Ringling Bros. in 1893. Pfening Archives.

The Jewell County Republican, Jewell City, without revealing its source, claimed that Ringlings carried \$11,000 out of Norton county.

There was nothing more exciting or as satisfactory and pleasing to Kansans as a summer day blessed with a circus. Huge crowds assembled as noted previously, but what preparations were made for the accommodations of the visitors? Ten thousand visitors in a town the size of Mankato, population c. 1,000. The enor-

Giraffe illustration from an 1893 Ringling courier distributed by advance car No. 2. Pfening Archives.



mity of feeding the multitude, providing toilets, medical care, lost and found people and articles, crowd control, police protection, care of the hundreds of horses hitched on the streets and vacant lots. How did Mankato and other small towns manage the day?

But they did manage, and thousands returned to the loneliness of the homestead with enough happy memories to last through the year until another caravan of the world's wonders came their way. Circus day was bigger than the Fourth of July and nearly as important as Christmas.

The Phillipsburg *Herald* on April 27 noted that, "Advertising car No. 2 of Ringling Brothers shows is in

the city today, covering the town with paper telling of the glories that are coming. The show has billed the entire country as far south as Stockton and north into Nebraska. It visits Mankato, Norton, Phillipsburg, and then goes to Salina, missing Smith Centre, Bellaire and other small towns. Car No. 3 will be here next week to finish up the work of advertising the greatest show that ever visited this section."

The *Herald* estimated that Ringlings sold nearly 11,000 tickets for the exhibitions at Phillipsburg on May 13.

Phillipsburg's other paper, the *Dispatch*, ahead of show day, warned its readers to, "Look out for the shell, soap, green goods, chuck o-luck and other games when in the city next Saturday attending the circus. They will be here no doubt, and if you don't keep your hands on your pocketbook they are liable to presto change some of your wealth from yours into their pocket."

The warning was needless for the Ringling show did not tolerate fakirs, gamblers and other thieves.

The *Dispatch* was more exact than the *Herald* in reporting ticket sales. The *Dispatch* put the figure at 9,952.

The ladies of the Christian church served 25 cent dinners at noon on circus day and netted "quite a little sum of cash," according to the *Dispatch*.

Following the Phillipsburg exhibitions the Herington *Signal* reported that, "Three train loads of Ringling Bros show goods went through town Sunday over the Rock Island. Nearly half the people in town were at the depot to see them." The show was en route to Salina.

Ringling exhibited in McPherson on May 16, ahead of Cook & Whitby which played the town on Thursday, May 18. Both had good business.

The Hutchinson *Daily News* published the following review of circus day on May 17: "The Ringling Brother's shows appeared in this city yesterday for the first time, although they have been candidates for public favor for ten years.

'The crowd at the day entertainment was very large, and when we consider that the whole of the north side of Barnum's tent, a year ago, was occupied by the Columbus spectacle, and yesterday it was crowded with people, one is lead to believe that the largest crowd was in the city that had ever been seen in its history.

"But to return to the Ringling entertainment: It is something out of the line of 'circus chestnuts,' largely, and was voted by the crowd to be the best ever seen in the city, and to comprise as nearly a crowd of gentlemen and ladies as was ever seen in the capacity of showmen.

"M. B. Raymond, the press agent, is as enthusiastic over the wonderful aggregation, and its success, as are the Ringlings themselves, and is untiring in his efforts to make every one present feel at home, and thoroughly understands the peculiarities and good points of every sight to be seen, from the hippopotamus to the finest performer in the ring.

"Among those deserving of special mention are the Reno sisters, aged 18 and 22 years, in their wonderful riding act, occupying the ring at the same time, and on separate horses, yet performing marvelous feats of bareback riding together.

"Charles W. Fish, the veteran and champion bareback rider of the world, whose name is familiar to all lovers of riding specialists.

The four Walton Brothers are simply marvelous in their work, and when they once appear in the ring your heart is in your mouth until they finally take their hasty departure to the dressing room for rest and a change.

"The troupe of Arabs, with Si Hassan Ben Ali as manager, astonished the entire audience with their wonderful per-

formances, and were loudly cheered. Ben Ali is quite a noted Arabian, and although his men are not all as much at home in the use of the American language as he, they are perfectly trained, and their part of the performance is a special feature of the work in the circus tent.

"Master Johnnie Rooney, riding and driving twelve Shetland ponies, never fails to come in for his share of applause and admiration. He is a wonderful boy, and he has a brilliant future before him.

'The marvelous feats in the aerial riggings were the delight of the crowd, and the contor-



Front cover of an 1893 Ringling Bros. courier. Pfening Archives.

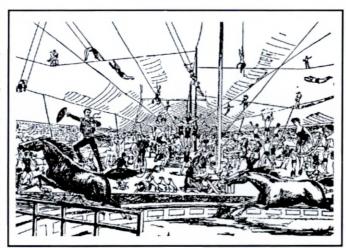
tionists came in for an equal share of applause and pleasantries.

"Professor Weldon's superb band did much to make the performance throughout a success, and their excellent music was the subject of many commendatory remarks.

'The menagerie is complete in every particular, and the cleanly manner in which it is kept does away with the traditional unpleasant odor so common in such places.

"A nicer, more genteel and obliging set of attaches can not be found with any circus in the land, and the Ringlings, who are, themselves, gentlemen in all that the word implies, are to he congratulated for

Illustration from an 1893 Ringling Bros. courier. Pfening Archives.



having surrounded themselves with such a gentlemanly and ladylike outfit of persons, thus doing away with the old theory, which was formerly a correct one, that nothing but thieves, thugs and tough people became attached to a circus.

"We unqualifiedly assert that it was the most genteel and moral outfit ever seen in the city in connection with the show business, and when they make their return trip among us they will be greeted by a crowd which will fully prove the truthfulness of our statement."

It was not only an honor to have show bills decorate a merchant's windows, but it was also an obligation. In return for general admission tickets the merchant was obliged to keep the posters in the window until the show was over. Ringlings kept a record of all bills posted and on show day an agent made the rounds and rewarded all those who had faithfully kept their contract. On show day May 18, two merchants of Kingman learned that the Ringlings were serious in their advertising. The Kingman Weekly Journal carried the story. "A Little Pre-

"Probably the worst disappointed firms over the circus and menagerie were Carter & Hobson, and Kirchner, the tailor. For the last three weeks they have had their front windows decorated with women in tights, giraffes and hippopotamuses. In the case of the first named the show bills covered up the signs of 'Smoke Old Style,' 'Chew Kentucky Twist,' and 'Smoke the Roller.' In the latter case the classical expression 'Do you wear pants?' or 'A wallpaper fit guaranteed' was covered up, while the proprietors fondly gazed on an order for tickets; but in the hour when no man expected it, grief came. The boys

wanted to clean the windows and the pic-

tures were removed and neglected to be

replaced. A smooth fellow called around,

asked for the order and tore it up before

family circle of Kirchner and a downcast look to overspread the children's faces. Emery Hobson, on the strength of the order, had engaged his best girl's company for the show, but rumor has it that he was represented by his absence. It was a cruel blow and we extend sympathy."

In another column the *Journal* reported that, "Ringling's greatest show on earth drew a large crowd to the city yesterday. There is no use talking, the Ringling's put up the best show on the road. While it was counted good last year, it is much better this."

Ringlings did not play Clay Center in 1893, but the citizens of the town got a peak at the show when, en route to Salina, it stopped in Clay Center to water the stock on May 14.

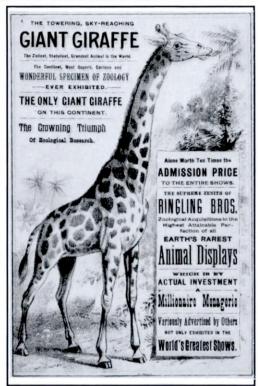
The Arkansas Valley Democrat, speaking of the exhibitions in Arkansas City on May 20, echoed the praise the show received in every town along its route.

'The largest crowd that has ever been gathered together under one canvas in Cowley county, drank red lemonade and ate peanuts under the Ringling Bros. white city of tents in Arkansas City last Saturday. It is estimated that there were ten thousand people attended the circus in the afternoon and fully five thousand at night. The Ringling Brothers have one of the nicest and cleanest circuses on the road. It is free from gamblers and fakers of all kinds, and every feature of their entertainment is first-class. Their menagerie contains many rare animals among them the giraffe, the hippopotamus, the Gnu, and many others that are often advertised but seldom on exhibition. In short, the Ringling Bros. have one of the best shows now traveling in the west."

Anyone having business with the Ringling show in any way was something of a celebrity on circus day. Following the exhibitions on May 22, the Pittsburg *Headlight* acknowledged some men who had important parts to play in the success of the day.

"The Missouri Pacific circus trains were manned by conductors Vanderver and Bryant, with brakemen Devier, Doyle and Baker in Vanderver's crew, and brakemen McMillan, Parger and Rex with Bryant. The trains were pulled by engineer John Webb with engine 832, with Mat Johnson as fireman, and Wm. Johnson, engine 814, with fireman Ed Meyers. The boys are all well known to the writer and a fine set of boys they are too."

On May 29, Ringling's had two turnaway crowds at Kansas City, Missouri, and the following day May 30 drew two large houses at Leavenworth, one on a miserably rainy evening. The Leavenworth Standard told the story: "Only those who found themselves under the big tent of Ringling Bros.' show last night realize how thoroughly disagreeable it was. The evening performance had no sooner begun than a steady rain set in, and the rain had not long continued till it began percolating through the big canvas at every point. As the rain increased on the outside the streams on the inside grew thicker. There was no use trying to dodge them, although a good many people put in part of the time moving from place to place. Those who had umbrellas hoisted them early and kept them up till the show was out. Those unfortunate



A page from an 1893 Ringling courier. Pfening Archives.

enough to have no umbrellas with them sat on the damp seats, dodged the rain as best they could and gritted their teeth as they thought of the condition their good clothes would be in today. Many left the tent before the performance was half over.

"When the big tent began to fall and the crowd began making a break for conveyances home the show ground presented an aspect not easily described. The ground was rough, muddy and exceedingly slippery. Every available conveyance was loaded down within a few seconds and scores had to stand on the roadside and wait for the wagons to return again. It was a terrible night for a circus, so the performance was cut very short.

"As a rule what is said of a circus the day after the performances may be relied on. The verdict of the majority of the people who went to the circus yesterday afternoon was that the Ringling's put up as good a class of entertainment as the Barnum show. The street parade was also a fine spectacle."

Seneca saw the show on June I. On the 9th the *Courier-Democrat* claimed that, "Over ten thousand people were in Seneca on Thursday of last week, and there were no rows or no drunks." The stores in Seneca, by mutual agreement, closed from one o'clock until after the matinee.

The Courier-Democrat reported a sad occurrence. "Will Worthington, foreman of one of Ringling Bros.' advertising brigades, fell from a window at Commercial Hotel at Hastings, Nebraska, last Sunday [May 27] and was killed. He was sleeping in a bed close to an open window and fell out while asleep."

Seneca was billed for a matinee only, the evening performance being omitted for reasons not stated.

Seneca had three newspapers in 1893, the *Courier-Democrat*, the *News* and the *Tribune*. All had only good to say for the Ringling show, but the *Tribune* said it best: "THE CROWD.

"Last Thursday, the date of Ringling Bros.' circus, witnessed the largest gathering of people that ever assembled in Seneca or in Nemaha county. The number of strangers was estimated to be between eight and ten thousand, and that is not an exaggerated calculation. By 6 o'clock the visitors began to arrive, and at the hour of the parade Main Street on either side was a mass of humanity from the Gilford to the Opera House. The parade was a gorgeous affair. One

of the Ringling Bros. informed a TRIB-UNE representative that somewhere between 10,500 and 11,000 people were beneath the big canvas during the performance. Before the ticket office closed two men started for the First National Bank with two hundred and forty pounds of silver, it having piled up until it got in the way and was a hindrance to the man in the box. It counted out \$3,500, which up to that time shows seven thousand people had presented silver for admission, to say nothing of those who exchanged bills.

'The managers and circus were first class. In the circus ring none of the old and vulgar jokes that used to shock some were perpetrated. It is clean in every particular, and no fakirs or swindlers are allowed with the show, two detectives being employed to watch and protect the people from pickpockets and thieves.

"It was the most orderly crowd we ever saw, not a single disturbance or an arrest made during the day."

During the season of 1893, Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows exhibited in these Kansas towns: May 11, Mankato; May 12, Norton; May 13, Phillipsburg; May 15, Salina; May 16, McPherson; May 17, Hutchinson; May 18, Kingman; May 19, Wichita; May 20, Arkansas City; May 27, Pittsburg; May 29, Kansas City, Missouri; May 30, Leavenworth; June 1, Seneca*.*Matinee only.

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera and Video, Inc., Topeka, Kansas

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GREETINGS OF THE SEASON



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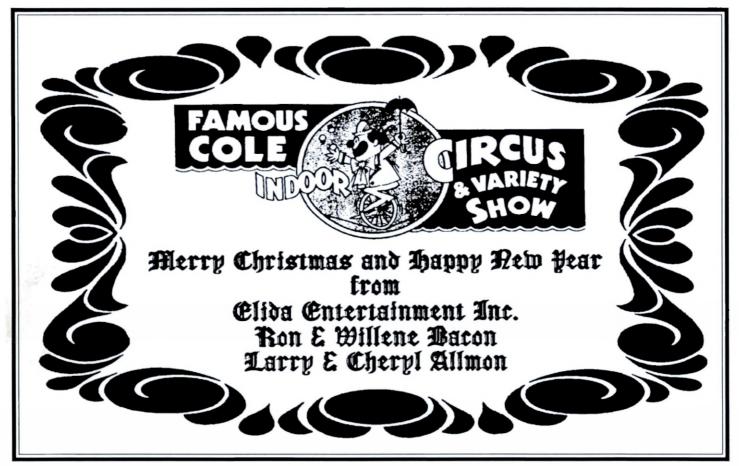
First published in 1976 and long out of print, this new edition (with some corrections and additions) is still the most comprehensive history of the first thirty-seven years of the American circus ever published.

The pioneers of the ring, John Bill Ricketts, Victor Pepin, Jean Breschard, Philip Lailson and their troupes, their programs and their travels appear here as do the early American proprietors Nathan Howes, Aaron Turner, Price & Simpson, J. Purdy Brown and all the others.

If the beginnings of the tented circus, the movements of the circus into the West, the fires and fights and triumphs of the early companys interest you, then this is the book in which to read about them.

Paperbound, 5"x 8", 8 illustrations, 240 pages. \$30 (post-paid) from the author.

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A traditional Christmas refrain that perhaps someday we can live by year around. Wishing all of you Joy, Good Health and Peace in 1994.

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HOLIDAY GREETINGS

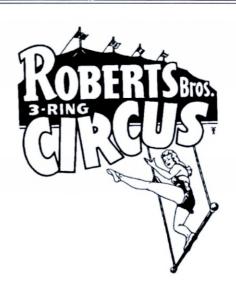
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Magically Yours, Single Kon



RB SIDE SHOW DACKAGE

Rare souvenir materials from **Johann Petursson**, "**The Viking Giant**". Featured with Ringling/Barnum and major side shows for many seasons. He stood over 8' tall and weighed over 400 pounds. This unusual set of his souvenir "Pitch" items includes two giant-sized rings - a metal initial ring and a colorful plastic photo ring - each so large that a silver dollar passes easily through the middle. Completing the package is a truly giant sized, full color, 6" x 9" photo postcard. These items, offered by Petursson seasons ago on the inside stages are genuine, and in mint condition. Set of 3 items \$27.50 Postpaid.

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These 1958 R/B cards measure 5" x 7" and feature the old Horse, Clown and Elephant Logo in red, blue and black on white. Inside greeting wishes a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the "Greatest Show on Earth" and they are imprinted with Merle's name.

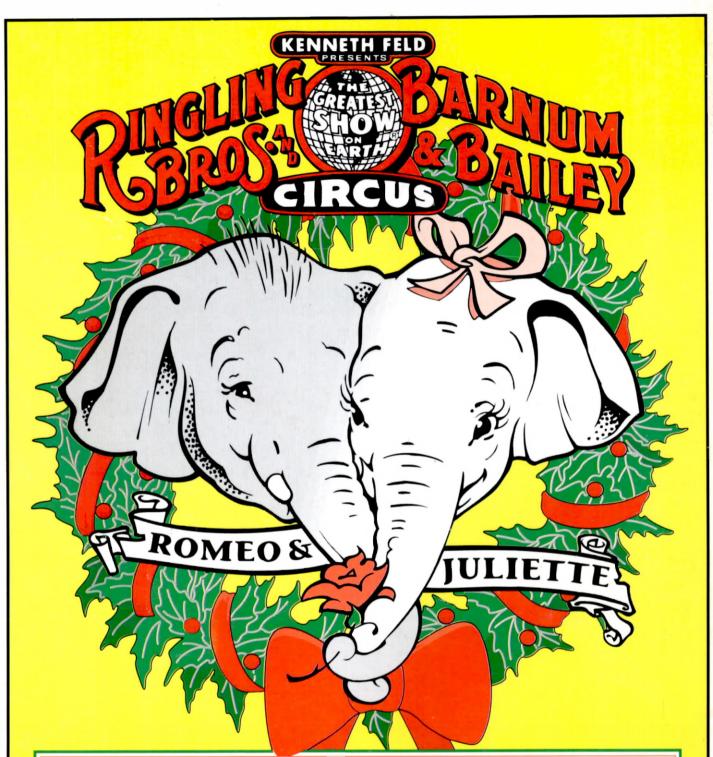
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